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ANTIPASTORALISM:  
A RESISTANT GEORGIC MODE

Donald Mark Zimmerman

A DISSERTATION

in

ENGLISH

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate Group in English  
of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy.

2000

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Supervisor of Dissertation

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Graduate Group Chairperson

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DONALD MARK ZIMMERMAN

2000

## DEDICATION

This, and all my work, I dedicate to my wife,  
Gail Lynne, and my children, Monica and Marshall.

Without concern he hears, but hears from far,  
Of tumults, and descents, and distant war;

His cares are eased with intervals of bliss;  
His little children, climbing for a kiss,  
Welcome their father's late return at night;...

———Dryden's *Georgics* 2.709-10, 759-61

Her children arise and call her blessed;  
her husband also, and he praises her:  
"Many women do noble things,  
but you surpass them all."

———Proverbs 31.28-29

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Never could I have come to Philadelphia and written this dissertation without the support of Brig. Gen. (ret) Jack Shuttleworth, former head of the Department of English at the United States Air Force Academy. He is the one who suggested that I apply to Penn, and the one who convinced Air Force personnel officers that it would not be unproductive for a pilot to study poetry full-time. I am also profoundly grateful to Prof. Stuart Curran for working with me and my peculiar, short schedule that the Air Force has required. From beginning to end, Prof. Curran provided me not only with form and direction for this project, but more importantly he has been a model of exacting scholarship and precision, combined with a generosity of spirit. Experiencing the unbounded enthusiasm, wit, and insight of Prof. Michael Gamer has been one of the greatest joys of my academic life. His incisive questions and the depth of his analysis helped me learn better how to learn. Even though the Atlantic Ocean separated us while I wrote this dissertation, he returned my drafts with a speed matched only by the quality of his suggestions. Despite, or perhaps because of our differing specializations, Prof. John Richetti furnished me with a more accurate understanding of eighteenth-century georgic through his instructive and timely comments. Thanks goes as well to former graduate chairperson Prof. Jim English who, when other

universities would not entertain my special circumstances, found a way for the realization of this degree.

My personal gratitude extends to my father, Rev. Donald M. Zimmerman, for proofreading each chapter, and more generally for instilling me with a love for books; to my family and friends, for their much-needed prayers and encouragement; to my wife and children, for their patience and endurance through this time; and especially to my Maker, who sustained me through the countless moments when completion seemed an impossibility, and who continues to work "all things together for good."

## ABSTRACT

## ANTIPASTORALISM:

## A RESISTANT GEORGIC MODE

DONALD MARK ZIMMERMAN

STUART CURRAN

This dissertation contends that the British georgic did not vanish in the late eighteenth-century, but was transformed by unempowered writers into what became a persistent, informing spirit of early Romanticism. Abolitionists, women, Afro-British slaves, and those who protested land enclosure developed a multivalent, resistant mode of writing, which I name "antipastoralism," that countered orthodox, poetical celebrations of empire and industry. Writers who could neither own land nor gain the benefits of their own labor often labeled themselves and/or their personae explicitly as exiles, mapping their sense of alienation onto a bucolic tradition. Rather than portraying pre-industrial space as savage, authors such as Olaudah Equiano (the first African to write a full-length narrative in English) and anti-slavery poets (from 1787 to 1791) adapt a received georgic theogeny—the story of a golden age spoiled by the curse of labor, a curse that arises both from divine decree and human injustice—into a discourse that represents their displacement from the land. Whereas argumentation in anti-slavery writing is grounded in issues of ownership and a remediation of material conditions, women, who lacked opportunities for proprietorship as

well as the hope of legal recourse, conceptualize dispossession differently. The poetry of Charlotte Smith, who was perhaps the most popular female poet of the 1790s, is offered as a case study of how a woman transfers imagery of a threatening environment into a hostile, antipastoralist landscape wherein she envisions her involuntary exile. William Wordsworth's earliest long poems also operate in this resistant georgic mode. In his *The Ruined Cottage* (1797-99), however, some critics have read his retreat from radical social rhetoric as a displacement of human suffering by an ameliorative ideology. By contrast, I resituate Wordsworth in the generic context of writing by dispossessed authors who immediately preceded him, refiguring his ideology instead as a generic event. "Home at Grasmere" (1806) is then offered as an example of Wordsworth's new kind of pastoral, one which suppresses the antipastoralist mode he inherited.



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## Toward a Bucolic Vocabulary

A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre. Therefore even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive.

—Mikhail Bakhtin<sup>1</sup>

There is a story about late eighteenth-century British literature that needs to be told. It has the feel of a mystery: what happened to the georgic? Georgic writing—at times called "the characteristic eighteenth-century cultural mode"<sup>2</sup>—was a dominant literary form for the first two-thirds of the century<sup>3</sup>, but after about 1770 it was "unable to speak its name."<sup>4</sup> How did it vanish? Addressing this question, Kurt Heinzelman claims that georgic writing's singular commitment to didacticism and

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<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. "Characteristics of Genre." *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis in original. James Murdoch, "The Landscape of Labor: Transformations of the Georgic" in *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnson, et. al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 189. See pages 181-91 for a discussion of how Virgilian constructions are mapped onto British cultural values, from the Tudor reign through the treatises of Adam Smith. Murdoch contextualizes the eighteenth-century appropriation of the *Georgics* in representations of governance in landscape traditions.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Heinzelman, "Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33:2 (Summer 1991), 182.

agricultural improvement became "unthinkable as an aesthetic norm until its fictional status, the play of its signifiers, [could] be reclaimed for imaginative use" (199). That reclamation occurred, according to Heinzelman, in William Wordsworth's 1815 Preface to his two-volume collection of poems where the poet's designation of "idyllic" is often interpreted as a version of georgic (205). Other critics have read Wordsworth's "Michael: a Pastoral Poem" (1800) as a refashioned pastoral or even a renamed georgic,<sup>5</sup> adumbrating that the georgic of the eighteenth-century went underground for roughly three decades and emerged in the nineteenth-century in a very different shape.<sup>6</sup>

Heinzelman's 1990 "Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age" virtually stands alone in broaching the question of what might

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<sup>4</sup> John Barrell, *The Dark Side of Landscape*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Lessa, "Wordsworth's *Michael* and the Pastoral Tradition." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 53:2 (Winter 1983/4), 181-94. Lessa characterizes pastoralism in "Michael" as a tension of opposite forces: a centripetal one that engages an expansive notion of timeliness, and a centrifugal moment that is grounded in images of a static timelessness. Thus, Lessa finds images of the eras of gold and iron in Wordsworth. Bruce E. Graver ("Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral: *Otium* and *Labor* in "Michael." *European Romantic Review*, 1:2 [Winter 1991], 119-34) reads Virgil's *Georgics* at work in "Michael," and labels Wordsworth's redefinition of a golden age of leisure into one of labor as "georgic pastoral."

<sup>6</sup> I find it significant that this span closely corresponds with the alleged "trough of poetry" described by Stuart Curran as existing from 1764 to 1799. See his "The I Altered" in *Romanticism and Feminism*. ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 185-207. Until recently, scholarship has ignored the work of certain unempowered writers,

have taken place in this interim period. Earlier, conventional georgic—formal and unambivalently promotional in its celebration of English capitalism—was countered by “another, eventually silenced and/or forgotten, tradition of *Virgilian georgic* that has equal historical validity and is often diametrically opposed to the cultural agenda of orthodox georgic” (183, my italics). This second, oppositional form—which I shall name in this chapter—is less a genre, than a mode: “Like pastoral, georgic is...an informing spirit, an attitude toward life, and a set of themes and images rather than anything so definite, say, as a four-book, didactic poem of two thousand lines on the subject of agriculture”.<sup>7</sup> For Heinzelman, this alternate, competing mode of georgic becomes a “georgic institutionalism that was pervasive just before the Romantic era, then became invisible, and yet remained an impermeable, silent base for still another, quite different kind of institution—Romanticism” (184).

“Wordsworthian Romanticism,” he should say, for that is where his story ends, in a brief *proposal that this new georgic is the foundation of Wordsworth’s poetic program.*

The story of this new, late eighteenth-century georgic needs to be told because neither Heinzelman nor anyone else has answered the questions that necessarily arise from these contentions: Who may have written that alternate georgic? What

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resulting in the misjudgment that this interim suffers from a dearth of “great English poets” (187).

was its cultural function? Out of what writing traditions did that alternate georgic grow? Furthermore, what is its relationship to the strand of Romanticism put forward in *Lyrical Ballads*? A problem is embedded in this last question, of course, because there is no single Romanticism in Wordsworth. Since Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* in 1983, New Historicists have often defined Romanticism as a series of displacements—as one of “extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualization whereby the actual human issues with which the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealized localities.”<sup>8</sup> More recent scholarship treats Wordsworthian Romanticism instead as a generic event. Bruce E. Graver, for example, has proposed that Wordsworth's debt to Virgil's *Georgics* led to a new kind of writing, the “georgic pastoral.” This dissertation will address certain needs that exist in both approaches: the ideologically-based criticism of McGann lacks the contextual heft that a generic reconstruction can provide, while genre-oriented studies thus far have inadequately addressed the material issues raised when we begin to pay attention to the

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<sup>7</sup> Low, Anthony. *The Georgic Revolution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1985), 7.

<sup>8</sup> McGann, Jerome J. *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 1. See his chapter on “Wordsworth and the Ideology of Romantic Poems,” pages 81-94. For New Historical readings that follow aspects of McGann's strategy, see also Annabel Patterson (*Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], 265-81) and chapter one of Marjorie

kinds of writing that immediately preceded Wordsworth. All too often, explorations of Wordsworth and genre begin at Virgil, hopscotch from Milton to Pope to Thomson, and land in 1800.<sup>9</sup> Identifying the writers who wrote within this alternate, contending mode—situating them within and against inherited traditions—promises a fuller account. In providing such a history, I intend not only to recover a georgic mode in that period, but also to argue for it as a persistent, at times dominant, and always informing spirit of early Romanticism.

### Orthodox Georgic and Antipastoralism

A wealth of critical studies have concurred that a central figure in Wordsworth's poetry is the exile, whether assuming the form of the Mad Mother, a wandering prophet, or the poet himself.<sup>10</sup> Existing scholarship has examined the literary sources

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Levinson's *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> For example, David Reid ("Thomson and Wordsworth: A Debt with a Difference." *Scottish Literary Review* [May 1992], 5-17) finds Wordsworth's handling of nature in *An Evening Walk* as an alteration of James Thomson's presentation of the structuring power of nature in *The Seasons*. Heinzelman begins at Virgil and shows Wordsworth's reimagination of georgic through Milton. A conventional approach can be found in A. J. Sambrook's "An Essay on Eighteenth-Century Pastoral, Pope to Wordsworth" (*Trivium* 5: 21-35 and 6: 103-15, 1970). More recently, Kevis Bea Goodman ("Passionate Work": *Toward a Georgics of the Feelings*. Dissertation. Yale University, 1994.) studies Virgil, Milton, Thomson, and Wordsworth's *The Excursion*.

for his displaced characters, but the generic strategies he employs to develop the world in which he sets these exiles has received less scrutiny; gaps of six or seven decades (stretching back to James Thomson) or nearly two millennia (to Virgil) afford Wordsworth a sanctity from "minor," proximate writers. Indeed, reading Wordsworth for his debt to authors separated from him by great spans of time would find support in Wordsworth's own narrative of his reading in Book V of *The Prelude*. However, as Mary Jacobus and Duncan Wu have suggested,<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth owed far more to contemporary writers than he was willing to acknowledge. Taking this cue, this dissertation will present evidence of a resistant georgic mode practiced by writers much nearer to Wordsworth, writers who often could neither own land, nor gain the benefits of their own labor and who labeled themselves and/or their personae explicitly as exiles. The most conspicuous members of this group in the 1780s and 1790s were women and slaves. Proponents of the anti-slavery movement and women

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<sup>10</sup> See: 1) Geoffrey H. Hartman (*Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964]), part one and chapters four, seven, and nine in part three, 2) Harold Bloom ("The Internalization of Quest-Romance." *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*. ed. Harold Bloom. [New York: W.W. Norton, 1970]), 3-24, 3) M. H. Abrams (*Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. [New York: W. W. Norton, 1971]) 116-17, and 4) Celeste Langan (*Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom*. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995]), chapters two and three.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (1798)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

writers form a multivalent voice that addresses the relationship of their own dispossession to both external nature and society. Their voice in English culture could not be ignored by Wordsworth, nor by any other writer who would seek a place on the national literary stage. I will present abolitionist poetry from 1787 to 1791, Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (first published in 1789), and the poetry of Charlotte Smith (perhaps the most popular poet of the 1790s) from 1784-1793 as exemplary of the sort of alternate georgic mode that Heinzelman suggests. In and around these primary works, I will map the contours of bucolic writing,<sup>12</sup> tracking the protean forms of pastoral, antipastoral, and georgic that eventually surface in new ways in Wordsworth's poetry.

Unraveling the terms which I just set forth is the first step toward such a project. Against the "silenced and/or forgotten georgic" Heinzelman sets the earlier, conventional form which he calls the "English georgic" (183). He probably takes this latter phrase from the title of the only book published in over three

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<sup>12</sup> To an extent, I am adopting Richard Feingold's use of the term "bucolic" (*Nature and society : Later Eighteenth-Century Uses of the Pastoral and Georgic*. [New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press. 1978], 16). Feingold uses "bucolic" as a broad conception that encompasses the pastoral and the georgic genres. Dyer and Cowper, he notes, blend both kinds of writing, "although Virgil keeps them separate." (I will present evidence that suggests that the two forms are blended in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*; when they are, that blended form is what I will call an antipastoralism.) I further wish to nuance "bucolic" by considering it as a "mode...an informing spirit," after Anthony Low, as opposed to Feingold's more formal appropriation.



decades which is dedicated to the study of the georgic in the eighteenth-century, John Chalker's *The English Georgic* (1969). Chalker's purpose is to open ever so slightly the umbrella of eighteenth-century "formal georgic"—poems which "deal in some aspect of husbandry and [are] a conscious attempt to reproduce the essential structural features of [Virgil's *Georgics*]" and include only John Philip's *Cyder* (1708), Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752), John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), and James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764)—to cover works such as Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest*, James Thomson's *The Seasons*, and Richard Jago's *Edge-Hill* (1767). This latter group of poems bear the "spirit of Virgil" by conveying "on the one hand [an awareness] of the instability of civilized values, and on the other the ethic of work, and of the need to build patiently by mastering the fundamental resources of life" (12). His appellation for the values to which this more inclusive set of works ascribes is "Georgic"—the capitalization of the word signifying poetry (and only poetry) which is faithful to Virgil's *Georgics* in subject matter, if not in formal poetics.

Heinzelman would at first appear simply to transfer Chalker's "Georgic" into the name "English georgic," but he sharpens the term, exposing the implicit assumptions that Chalker makes. "English georgic" is a thoroughgoing celebration of a product and its production, together which strengthen the nation through the exercise of capitalism. The lack of discomfort toward the laboring conditions of mercantile enterprise is evident in both

"English georgic" texts and Chalker's criticism of them. In the *Georgics* itself, though, we can precisely locate an uneasiness toward the *raison d'être* of labor and the manufacturing arts in a section that is often designated the "Hesiodic" or the "Virgilian" theogeny (1.121-146).<sup>13</sup> As an important received text

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<sup>13</sup> Since my construction of a way of reading bucolic literature depends upon the theogenical passage, I will provide the Fairclough rendering of these lines (*Georgics*. tr. H. Rushton Fairclough., rev. G. P. Goold. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999], 109-110). Because the essential issue of this chapter concerns contending eighteenth-century readings of Virgil in general, and the cause of labor in particular, I will also provide the pertinent lines of John Dryden's 1697 and Joseph Warton's 1753 translations.

The Fairclough reads:

The great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not run smooth, who first made art awake the fields, sharpening men's wits with care, nor letting his kingdom slumber in heavy lethargy. Before the reign of Jove [footnote: "In the Golden Age, when Saturn reigned."] no tillers subjugated the land: even to mark possession of the plain or apportion it by boundaries was sacrilege; man made gain for the common good, and Earth of her own accord gave her gifts all the more freely when none demanded them. Jove it was who put the noxious venom into deadly snakes, who bade the wolf turn robber and the ocean swell with tempest, who stripped honey from the leaves, his fire from view, and stayed the wine that once ran everywhere in streams, so that experience, from taking thought, might little by little forge all manner of skills, seeking in ploughed furrows the blade of corn, striking forth the spark hidden in the veins of flint. Then first did rivers feel upon their backs boats of hollowed alder, then the mariner grouped and named the stars, Pleiads and Hyads and Lycaon's daughter, the radiant Bear. Then was discovered how to catch game with traps, snare birds with lime, and how to encircle vast coverts with hunting dogs. Already one man is lashing a broad stream with his casting net, seeking the bottom, while another trawls through the sea his dripping meshes. Then came unyielding iron and the

in the rapidly developing, industrial British culture, work and its consequences are presented as existing in part because of divine curse, which for eighteenth-century writers is transposed into the Christian story of the Fall and expulsion from the garden.<sup>14</sup> Since the governing drive in Chalker's book is to

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blade of the rasping saw (for primitive man used wedges to cleave wood until it split), and art followed hard on art. Toil triumphed over every obstacle, unrelenting Toil, and Want that pinches when life is hard.

Dryden (*The Works of John Dryden*. v. 15. [London: Printed for W. Miller, 1808]) translates the last two lines of Virgil:

And various arts in order did succeed,  
(What cannot endless labour, urged by need?) (1.217-18)

This compares to Warton's (*The Works of Virgil, in Latin and English*. [London: Printed for R. Dodsley, 1753]) rendition:

Then all those arts that polish life succeed;  
What cannot ceaseless toil, and pressing need! (1.175-76)

Although the difference between the Dryden and Warton versions is slight, there may be a noteworthy transition at work in Warton's shift from "urged" to his own "pressing". The late seventeenth-century use of "to urge" can mean "to impel forward, to drive" (OED 3571), whereas "pressing" has a militaristic connotation, implying a seizure or being forced into some service (OED 2289). Perhaps Warton intends to relocate the "need" from an internal to an external site. Subtly, the reason for "ceaseless toil" may be denaturalized, arising from social versus individualized problems.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Low in chapter one (esp. 11) of *The Georgic Revolution* discusses the effect of the Christianization of the Virgilian theogeny on English writing, as does Stuart Curran in his chapter on the pastoral in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). For a broad history of Christian attitudes toward the tension between work and leisure, see chapter one of Kirk Faber's 1998 dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison). See also Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism*, chapter four.

rehabilitate the "Georgic" (as he calls it) by emphasizing only its heroic qualities, he slides off of a gesture toward the *labor omnia vincit* theme and into making a case for the heroic effort it takes to overcome the necessity of toil. "Good may therefore spring from the curse of work," he blithely notes, and after citing Dryden's imitation of this passage, he boils the "continual struggle between Man and Nature, a struggle which is seen through Virgil's contrast between unfallen and fallen man" into the conclusion that "the contest between Man and Nature is one of heroic dimensions, calling for the exercise of virtues heroic in quality" (26).

Chalker's critical elision of the curse (and cause) of work follows a pattern in the literature he reads. For example, John Philip's *Cyder* exults:

Let ev'ry tree in every garden own  
The redstreak as supreme, whose pulpous fruit,  
With gold irradiate and vermilion shines  
Tempting, not fatal, as the birth of that  
Primeval, interdicted plant that won  
Fond Eve in hapless hour to taste and die... (1.512-17)

In the time between the primeval and the present, the apple has been purified. Once an agent of death, now apples in an English garden retain only the tempting, sensory qualities of their ancestor; the fatal aspect of the first fruit is reduced to a legend. Philip's apple is the produce of an empire; the celebratory flavor of these lines overpowers any lingering taste of a curse. Chalker's analysis is flavored as well by his valorization of heroic work. He may have liberated the notion of

"English georgic" from the binds of formalism, but in the process he cleanly divides manufacturing from any curse of labor.

Heinzelman's account employs an acknowledgement of the curse of labor to separate "English georgic" from that oppositional form he calls "Virgilian georgic." Determining his essential distinction between the two, however, requires a close look at his description of their cultural functions. "English Georgic," he asserts, can be recognized by its "enactments" of "axiological premises and material features," whereas the "Virgilian georgic" is visible by its "entailments" of "values, assumptions, and cultural symptoms" (183). Interrogating the implications of these terms will explicate Heinzelman's conceptualization of "English" versus "Virgilian" georgic, permitting an inquiry into how the alternate georgic performed in the latter part of the eighteenth-century. The word "enactments" has a legal history, suggesting actions that follow from a decree (*OED* 857). Likewise, "axiological premises" implies a preexisting foundation of principles that are always already accepted as true. Contained within this concept is the presumption of a natural order that originates in a realm external to the human world. "Material features," then, issue as manifestations of transcendent truths, i.e.: capitalist trade is a divinely ordained response to a division of labor among the nations. The earlier, formal, dominant, and nationalistic kind of georgic is founded upon an orthodox cultural agenda: labor is good and its "material features" (cider, wool, hops, sugar cane, etc.) are the

stuff of which England is made. Rather than the broader adjective "English," I propose a more precise designation: "orthodox georgic."

The word "entailments" in Heinzelman's "Virgilian georgic" connotes an association with property (*OED* 874), and may refer to necessary consequences of an existing set of tangible circumstances. By contrasting "values [and] assumptions" with axioms, Heinzelman emphasizes an *a posteriori* quality of the former terms, since they can represent ideas accepted after the fact of certain events.<sup>15</sup> Therefore his statement that "Virgilian georgic" is "diametrically opposed to the cultural agenda of orthodox georgic" (183) suggests that this other georgic's "cultural symptoms" are concrete indications of labor being a curse. The unorthodox georgic is written from experience, not precept—experience that finds its voice in reaction to unjust contemporaneous social circumstances, just as the *Georgics* does by alluding to the historical displacement of native farmers by Caesar's military pensioners.<sup>16</sup> In the late eighteenth-century,

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<sup>15</sup> For example, a value's existence is premised upon its differentiation from an other that obtains less value. My point is that Heinzelman may imply that "values [and] assumptions" cannot stand independently of other ideas, as opposed to "axiological premises."

<sup>16</sup> Virgil's careful insertion of the displacement of original land owners by Italy's soldiery is treated at length in Chalker (*The English Georgic*. [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969], 8-13). Yet, Chalker sets aside the mass evictions as historical background and does not bring the condition of exile, which is the initial stage on which the entire poem is set, to bear on his reading of georgic poetry.

then, it is hardly surprising that this mode of experiential georgic would be taken up by the disenfranchised and the displaced—not just Wordsworthian exiles but also slaves, women, and rural laborers who, displaced from land without legal recourse, had much to gain by inscribing their own “cultural symptoms” into an unorthodox georgic.

In the last three decades of the late eighteenth-century, therefore, antipastoral poetry became the vanguard of a socially resistant discourse, complete with its own conceptual syntax, rhetorical patterns, and cosmogonies, crossing boundaries of literary form, and ultimately developing into an overarching mode: antipastoralism. Stuart Curran presents a list of terms extant in scholarship (and in doing so, he complicates these conventional categories), which I will use to facilitate this examination of antipastoralism as a mode. Genre, he reports, has stood for “the three divisions of literary discourse into master categories (narrative, drama, lyric), kind for the species of literature, mode for a more generalized orientation within the kind...” (Curran 9). Following Anthony Low, I will treat “kinds” as operating within modes. Thus, antipastoral as a kind, along with the other “bucolic” genres (pastoral and georgic), may work at times within an antipastoralist mode. As I will argue in a moment, the orthodox georgic mode and antipastoralism attract and

repel each other within a larger sphere of Virgilian georgic.<sup>17</sup>

Adapting Bakhtin's observation, we may say that this play constitutes the life of the resistant georgic mode.

Part of the purpose of the three ensuing chapters in this dissertation is to display the various composites of antipastoralism, and to show how they resonate through three shared tropes: the loss of property ownership, an alienation from one's former pleasant way of life, and entrapment in a cycle of unending toil caused not by divine curse but solely by social injustice. This is not an attempt to redesignate the antipastoral, but an effort 1) to regard the elements of ownership, alienation, and labor as evidence of a mode that specifically resists culturally orthodox assumptions about land and work, and 2) to tie antipastoral writing into a larger vision that encompasses the closely related issues found in anti-slavery and women's writing. "Antipastoralism" is my marker of that set of culturally resistant traits at work across the bucolic genres. Thus, there will be moments in antipastoralist writing that make

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<sup>17</sup> See the first chapters of Low in *Georgic Revolutions* and Curran's *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* for discussions on how modes of writing may blend. Hartman, in *Wordsworth's Poetry*, mentions that *An Evening Walk* is "ultimately based on Virgil's *Georgics*, which proved country matters could be the substance of a sustained poetry,..." (93), but he then halts his discussion on generic considerations. In more recent years, considerations of mixed genres in the bucolic mode include Anne D. Wallace ("Farming on Foot: Tracking Georgic in Clare and Wordsworth" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34:4, (Winter 1992), 509-540), Patterson's *Pastoral and Ideology*, and the articles by Graver and Lessa, cited above.



(georgic) arguments of nation-building. The term "antipastoralism" will hopefully allow this writing to be recognized for its spirit and attitude, as opposed to particular formal qualities.

The *locus classicus* for this broader view of the thematic mingling of labor and loss are the received texts of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, translated by John Dryden in 1697 and again by Joseph Warton in 1753.<sup>18</sup> Late eighteenth-century writers, studying parts of the Virgilian corpus circulating at the time, constructed a model that collected the disparate elements of these genres into a cohesive statement. Their resulting poems explained how a set of assumptions about the land, labor, ownership, natural order, and history interact in the literature of this period. By 1785 when George Crabbe wrote *The Village*, consequently, British writers had become less tolerant of sanguine renderings of rural life. Set-pieces on the joys of rusticity, for Crabbe, had decayed into "mechanic echoes of the

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<sup>18</sup> This is not to imply that learned writers did not receive Virgil more directly in their own translations from the Latin. I mean to point to the British culture's need to adapt the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* into their own tongue. John Philip, for example, wrote *Cyder* partly because there were fewer and fewer "learned" readers (those literate in Greek and Latin). In a century that experienced the greatest increase in agricultural technology and production in its history, many in the *literati*, especially those who wrote the more orthodox georgic poems, no doubt viewed their particular civilization as the inheritors of the classical tradition of building an empire through an expansion of its natural resources. Since my goal is to convey the late eighteenth-century version of the Virgilian bucolic as it pertained to issues of displacement, I will refer to Warton's translation, unless otherwise noted.

Mantuan song".<sup>19</sup> With Oliver Goldsmith and Charles Churchill,<sup>20</sup> 17

Crabbe considered his work to be participating in the original pastoral spirit:

From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way? (19-20)

To what part of Virgil, though, could he refer when he promises to "paint the Cot, / As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not" (76)? The answer is in the dialogue between Meliboeus and Tityrus that opens the first eclogue, and in the complaint of Moeris in the ninth. The opening lines of the first eclogue resists a synthesis of two competing concepts:

Meliboeus:  
In beechen shades, you Tit'rus, stretcht along,  
Tune to the slender reed your sylvan song;  
We leave our country's bounds, our much-lov'd plains,  
We from our country fly, unhappy swains!  
You, Tit'rus, in the groves at leisure laid,  
Teach Amaryllis' name to every shade.

Tityrus:  
O 'twas a god these blessings, swain, bestow'd,  
For still by me he shall be deem'd a god!  
For him the tend'rest of my fleecy breed  
Shall oft in solemn sacrifices bleed.  
He gave my oxen, as thou see'st, to stray,  
And me at ease my fav'rite strains to play. (1.1-12)

Immediately, we have the clash of dispossession and ownership. The former is associated with the injustice of exile, the latter with a claim of (almost) divine decree. On what basis are the

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<sup>19</sup> Crabbe *The Village*, line 18.

<sup>20</sup> Churchill authored *Prophecy of Famine: A Scots Pastoral* .

fortunes of the two shepherds divided?<sup>21</sup> Tityrus' response seems like a *non sequitur*; he appears barely sensible of his companion's troubles. Offering neither comfort nor even a commentary on the reasons for his friend's disaster, he blithely replies that a god granted his life of ease and productivity. Generally, pastoral pipes and song—a celebration of *otium* that gains its strength through its "evocation of a natural order that nurtures human freedom"<sup>22</sup>—are offered in response to the intrusions of social history.

"Natural order" and "history" here act as two competing, structural principles that divide pastoral and antipastoral modes within single texts. A pastoral natural order represents nature as a system of seemingly limitless parts that operate together according to preexisting law—not necessarily consciously and purposively, but as an organism that so happens to sympathize with human conditions. For example, when Meliboeus later complains to Tityrus that his goats no longer breed and his crop's fertility has diminished while Tityrus' adjacent farm prospers, we see nature exhibiting an automatic mimicry of the fortune of its denizens. But if this is so, why do two canonical

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<sup>21</sup> As Michael Putnam (*Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the Eclogues*. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970]) asks, "Is it right for one man to possess a landscape wherein complete disinterest in practical affairs (*otium*) is possible when another dweller in the land suffers exile imposed by a potent enemy?...What, then, brings Tityrus his good fortune, Meliboeus his bad luck?" (24). My reading of this part of *Eclogues* I is indebted to Putnam 24-25.

statements of eighteenth-century antipastoral (Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," and George Crabbe's "The Village") seem to follow suit? Are not the overgrowth and crumbling of the edifices of Auburn and the "frowning fields" around the Village also reflections of humanity's state of affairs? For Crabbe, "Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd [Nature's] place," and in Goldsmith the "tyrant" has disrupted forever the communal frolic. Providence undergirds the natural order—we remember that Pan superintends the harmony between shepherd and hill and God the Father provides the peace of Milton's Eden—whereas history undergirds the antipastoral. As opposed to pastoral's natural order, then, history (which is to say, the actual intervention of an uncontrollable human malevolence into the field of the erstwhile pastoral) is the logic by which fallen nature works. It dwells in antipastoral as a rupture, as the difference between the ages of gold and iron. While pastoral stages the prelapsarian (by its presupposition of our view of its garden across a divide<sup>23</sup>), antipastoral resides in the lapse itself, which accounts for the elegiac tone of late eighteenth-century antipastoral. Its subject is the Fall, intrusion, injustice—and especially, the change between the relationship of rural people and their environment from what it once was.

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<sup>22</sup> Curran, 86.

<sup>23</sup> See Curran's chapter on the pastoral in *Poetic Form*, esp. 88, for a discussion of the pastoral double-vision.

In Virgil, we can see a writer embedding this change as a conflict of structural principles even within a single utterance. Tityrus strikes a pose of timelessness by attributing his possession to the gift of a deity (who is no less, nor more, than Caesar Augustus). However, when Tityrus admits that "For still by me he shall be deem'd a god," (my emphasis), he reveals that his claim is a matter of perspective, which knowingly excludes Meliboeus. Tityrus' reply tacitly acknowledges the historical fact of the emperor's intervention in the same breath that it denies any historicity to a world created by a ruler's privilege. What is too often considered the essential feature of pastoral—the praise of leisure—is internally divided, even corrupted, in its alleged celebration. Jacques Derrida imagines competing forces that exist within larger genres as an internal pocket.<sup>24</sup> If we appropriate Derrida's figure for our present discussion, we can consider Meliboeus' response to Tityrus, for example, as a revelation of a world within a world:

Nay, mine's not envy, swain, but glad surprize,  
O'er all our fields such scenes of rapine rise!  
And lo! sad part'ner of the general care,  
Weary and faint I drive my goats afar,  
While scarcely this my leading hand sustains,  
Tir'd with the way, and recent from her pains;  
For mid' yon tangled hazles as we past,  
On the bare flints her hapless twins she cast,  
The hopes and promise of my ruin'd fold! (1.13-21)

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<sup>24</sup> Consult Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre" in *Glyph* 7, 1980 for a discussion of the mixing of genres according to this kind of procedure.

A blasted, rocky landscape—a hostile wilderness of “tangled hazles” and “bare flints” on which his she-goat casts her newborn twins to die—is both polarized by and enveloped within a lush fertility. As a mode, antipastoralism forms a pocket within a larger matrix of valorized *otium* (in the *Eclogues*) or labor (in the *Georgics*). Inside the pocket is the language of protest against exile and tyranny. At the same moment that entitled personae attempt to stifle a discussion of social wrongs, those who are dispossessed work to keep the discourse of displacement in the open. Natural order and history respectively fight to zip and unzip, if you will, the internal pocket.

With such diametric internal struggles, what is a *Pastoral* to do? While modern critics like Putnam have argued that “to suggest in a ‘bucolic poem’ that there are opposing ways of life...that the pastoral scene is accountable to something else is to destroy it” (26), we can see, even in Warton’s argument for the first eclogue, an assumption that myth maintains its force through its engagement with history:<sup>25</sup>

To reward the veteran soldiers that conquered Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi, Augustus distributed amongst them the lands of Cremona and Mantua: Virgil’s estate was seized among the rest, but he recovered it by the interest of Pollio, who warmly recommended him to the emperor.

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<sup>25</sup> Modern scholarship reads this “historical account” in the argument of *Eclogue* 1 as more apocryphal than true, but there is no indication that Warton or Dryden, from whom the former received the story, questioned its veracity.

Locating history within myth, Warton reads Tityrus allegorically, where the idyllic field sung by Tityrus adheres to Virgil. Dryden makes a similar gesture in his imitation of the ninth eclogue, rendering a scenario that could easily serve as a sequel to the action of the first eclogue: where Warton reads Virgil in Tityrus, Dryden reads him in Moeris, who secures his property from the government only to have it threatened again. The Argument frames the dialogue between Moeris and his fellow-shepherd Lycidas:

When Virgil, by the favor of Augustus, had recovered his patrimony near Mantua, and went in hope to take possession, he was in danger to be slain by Arius, the centurion, to whom those lands were assigned by the emperor, in reward of his service against Brutus and Cassius. This Pastoral therefore is filled with complaints of his hard usage; and the persons introduced are the bailiff of Virgil, Moeris, and his friend Lycidas.

Interestingly, the narrative of the Argument attempts to seal the rupture that takes place within the text of the eclogue itself, but the word "bailiff" hints at a deeper problematic. The contemporaneous sense of "bailiff" refers to a steward who is discharged to supervise another's estate (*OED* 157). Dryden's choice of the word is insightful; it denotes a figure bound to maintaining landholdings, while he places that character as a representative of the possible loss of those lands. "Bailiff" contains forces pulling in opposite directions—a mirror of the tensions noted earlier. If Moeris is the bailiff of Virgil, then the Argument assures us that the estate will be restored; ownership will be reestablished through a state-sanctioned

normalization of affairs. The poem, on the other hand, refuses to stop the play of tensions between dispossession and quietude. When Lycidas meets Moeris on the road to town, Moeris recounts the order of "the grim captain in a surly tone" who cried out "Pack up, ye rascals, and be gone" (Dryden, 9.6). Moeris' troubled spirit cannot brook any songs of merriment; his poetic powers are suspended, and at the end of the eclogue his legal case is left unresolved.

Michael Putnam states that "Once the idea of ownership and possession is introduced into a bucolic context, the dream is broken" (295). I would suggest, however, that "ownership" is not the disruptive agent; in the ninth eclogue, Moeris' exile assumes that role. Ownership, granted "by the favor of Augustus," is aligned with a natural order. A rupture of pastoral values—which is associated with the inauguration of history—occurs when a worker is displaced from land.

In bucolic writing, the ownership of land is signified by the institution of a natural order. Likewise, displacement from one's land is signified by the intrusion of history into the idyllic world. This concept may be stated formulaically: ownership is to displacement as a natural order is to history. The diametrical relationship of ownership and displacement is expressed in tropes of eviction. (There are no tenant farmers in Virgil.) Since each element in the second pair of terms (natural order and history) indicates the corresponding structuring



principle for the first pair, the formula may be technically phrased:

ownership: displacement::natural order: history.

The center of the above expression (::) represents a kind of transitional point from an age of timelessness into the era of history. The land retains its pastoral qualities only when it is hedged by the institution of ownership. When we see Moeris expelled across the boundary between *otium* and a space containing displacement, we may say that his complaint to Lycidas exists within that transitional space that is also a boundary.

To be more precise, the antipastoralism of the *Eclogues* happens within the moment of rupture. It is then that the tensions at work in issues of ownership and displacement, natural order and history, are most clearly evident—or, again revising the analogy:

Rupture

ownership: displacement::natural order: history

### Improvement and Late Eighteenth-Century Georgic

So far, I have characterized the conceptual interchange at the instant of dispossession, but there is, of course, a larger universe involved in the Virgilian bucolic. It is no accident that *Eclogue* 9 is peripatetic; Moeris and Lycidas travel from (what is for them) one world to another. The immediate

consequence is that Moeris' poetic lays, with which he tries to regale Lycidas, lack their former power:

...songs and rhymes  
Prevail as much in these hard iron times,  
As would a plump of trembling fowl, that rise  
Against an eagle sousing from the skies. (Dryden, 9.14-17)

Eradicated by dispossession, the golden age is expelled and with it the leisure afforded only through a possession of fruitful land. Once an external, human force such as the captain invades the idyllic arena, tyranny ushers in the iron age and Meliboeus and Moeris are forced from the prelapsarian into a harsh, postlapsarian era. The model developed thus far may be amended:

Pastoral (Prelapsarian) — ☐ Rupture ☐ Postlapsarian age

o n e r s i p i s p l a e e n t n a t u r a l o r e r i s t o r

n t e *Georgics*, e i e n e o t e i r o n a g e i s o r e l e a r l  
o u s e a n i s t o r i i e t e i a g e o t e s u r l a p t a i n e p a n s  
i n t o i i e s r i p t i o n s o a e l l i o s e a s t e l a n e o s t  
s t r i n g e a p l e o u r s a t t e c o n c l u s i o n o t e i r s t o o o  
*The Georgics* a s t e p o e t e s r i e s o a o s a s t u r n e t e o r l  
i n t o a p l a e

e r e r a u a n r a p i n e r i g t a n r o n g o n o u n  
e r e i p i o u s a r s r o e e r p a r t r e s o u n  
n o n s t r o u s r i e s i n e e r s a p e a r e r o n e  
e p e a e u l p e a s a n t t o t e a r s i s p r e s s e  
e i e l s l i e a l l o i n i n g l o r i o u s r e s t  
e p l a i n n o p a s t u r e t o t e l o a o r s

The crooked scythes are straightened into swords: (1.678-84)<sup>26</sup>

While the *Eclogues* seek an aura of timelessness by softening and containing the problems of war and exile, the *Georgics* permit a sense of historicity; at certain moments eruptions of battle are centrally situated. As in the *Eclogues*, though, these eruptions—the threats to landholders by the ravages of foreign incursions—must be contained. John Chalker reminds us of the political context of the *Georgics* (written from 37-30 BC). Maecenas, the patron to whom the poem is dedicated, asked Virgil to “write a poem on agriculture in order both to instil [sic] a new enthusiasm for the subject amongst the upper classes, and to provide practical instruction for veterans newly settled in the country” (8). After the battle at Phillipi in 42 BC, Octavian settled 100,000 demobilized soldiers in Italy, evicting hundreds of thousands from their estates, and until the battle of Actium nearly ten years later, battles and power struggles within triumvirate continued to shake the land itself. By the time that Virgil completed the *Georgics*, Italy had been united politically for only two generations (Wilkinson 21). The poem names about thirty Italian geographical regions (a specificity markedly lacking in the *Eclogues*), and during its composition it was not

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<sup>26</sup> This passage, rendered in the Latin, is the epigraph to Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants* in 1793.

at all certain just how the separate areas of Italy could be considered Roman.<sup>27</sup>

If, as Wilkinson declares, the *Georgics* is the "great poem of united Italy" (21) it becomes such through its shoring up of internal disunities—both politically and within its own textual apparatus. Struggle and disruption issue not only from political turmoil, but also from the supernatural:

The sire of gods and men, with hard decrees,  
Forbids our plenty to be bought with ease,  
And wills that mortal men, inured to toil,  
Should exercise with pains, the grudging soil. (1.183-86)

Hierarchical labor structures have the blessing of God; resituated in the mid-eighteenth-century when the problems of land enclosure became increasingly hard to ignore, however, Warton's translation of the pre-Jovian state must have carried a particular relevance:

Ere Jove had reign'd, no swains subdu'd the ground,  
Unknown was property, unjust the mound;  
At will they rov'd; and earth spontaneous bore,  
Unask'd, and uncompell'd, a bounteous store; (1.155-58)

Thus the Virgilian georgic extant in the British eighteenth-century had something for everyone; both supporters of orthodox strategies of land distribution and aggrandizement, as well as writers who defended the interests of the displaced working class could find explanations for their cause in "the best poem by the

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<sup>27</sup> See L. P. Wilkinson's discussion of the historical context of the *Georgics* in his introduction (*Georgics*. [New York: Penguin, 1982]).

best poet."<sup>28</sup>

Still unaddressed, though, is the georgic reply to the status quo. If a combination of historical problems and naturalized institutions are responsible for the fall from a better, simpler world, what now can be done? We see in the Virgilian georgic an assertion that virtuous labor is the vehicle for improving the state, bringing the nation closer to an ideal civilization. With this assumption, the unidirectional progression of the figure

prelapsarian → rupture → postlapsarian

is trans or e into a loop e an in un tions to rea t e  
stars or t e est ti e to plant t e instru tion on o to  
oose e un soil t e etaille i a ti s on prunin ines  
ulti atin rain ree in li esto an eepin ees all spea  
to a o erent a o in reasin pro u ti it so as to a an e  
so iet e i t is to all t is t e u oli o el at ere  
as it is ro ot t e *Eclogues* an t e *Georgics* an

ara teri e its attitu es to ar or lan o ners ip  
t eo en an t e inter ention o istor u a o el presents  
a uni ie tra ition o pastoral antipastoral an eor i t  
a e ara teri e ore su in tl

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<sup>28</sup> Dryden made this famous claim in his translation of the *Georgics*.

Pastoral (Prelapsarian)—□Rupture □Postlapsarian age  
eal i ili ation

o ners ip ispla e ent natural or er istor

pro e ent

n e elop ent o t e a o e o el an o e tion a e  
raise to using t e ter irgilian georgi <sup>29</sup> in a singular  
manner; certainly more than one Virgil circulated throughout  
literary works in the late eighteenth-century. I find, though,  
that the two literary modes under consideration (antipastoralism  
and an orthodox georgic mode) both emerge from a common set of  
premises. While no list can be all-inclusive, the following  
criteria of Virgilian georgic are offered for the sake of  
clarity:<sup>30</sup>

- 1) A nation's strength is improved through an intimate,  
harmonious relationship of land and labor.
- 2) Labor is an inescapable condition of humanity.
- 3) The introduction of labor into the human experience  
acts as the initiation of human history. It functions as  
the manifestation of the cosmic reorganization of the  
world from a pre- to a postlapsarian state.

<sup>29</sup> Heinzelman, it will be remembered, used "Virgilian georgic" to designate what I am calling a "antipastoralism." His terminology suggests that the alternate, competing georgic is more faithful to the Virgilian text. I find, on the other hand, that the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* constitute a larger set from which the competing subsets are derived.

<sup>30</sup> For other lists of georgic criteria, consult Low 12, and Dustin Griffin in "Redefining Georgic: Cowper's *Task*." *ELH* 57 (1990), 866.

- a) This reorganization is informed by the incorporation of the Virgilian theogeny<sup>31</sup> into the Christian story of the Fall.<sup>32</sup>
- b) The Fall is the result of both a prehistoric decree and malevolent human behavior.
- c) Evidence of the postlapsarian state is always entailed in contemporaneous (historical) circumstances.
- 4) The land's productivity depends upon the freedom of personal ownership. Loss of ownership yields a literal and figurative alienation from the land.

The following three chapters of this dissertation, then, will show how images and rhetoric in writing that forms an antipastoralist mode are patterned after the bucolic model and certain premises listed above. Chapter two, "Antipastoralism and Imperialism in Antislavery Writing," opens by analyzing what I will call "mercantile" georgic poetry from 1748 to 1764. Essential to a mercantile georgic is the reconfiguration of the prelapsarian into an age of savagery. James Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* removes the possibility of both pastoral and a moment of rupture, supplanting them with a Hobbesian mythos where "Industry" is the means of reshaping primeval, barbaric England into a commercial empire. Similarly, John Dyer's *The Fleece* fashions prehistory as a chaotic void out of which "Art and Toil" must create order and value. Various travel narratives that document explorers' impressions of Africa make similar arguments,

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<sup>31</sup> While the theogeny is explicit in the *Georgics*, Putnam finds it implicit in the *Eclogues* (chapter one of *Virgil's Pastoral Art*).

and Dyer adopts some of the tropes and rhetorical strategies of these imperialist accounts. James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* of 1764 is probably the last fully-executed, formal georgic in English that announces an imitation of Virgil. Set in Jamaica, it harnesses slaves as the tool of improving land and nation. I will argue that Grainger's effort to write a celebratory georgic fails because it cannot square the abuse of laborers (whom it admits were once landowners) with a call for patriotism and freedom.

The mercantile georgic meets resistance in an antipastoralism found in Charles Churchill's *Gotham* (1764), Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), Thomas Chatterton's *African Eclogues* (1770), and George Crabbe's *The Village*. Each of these works restores the concept that a golden age has been spoiled by tyrannical impositions. Most significantly, "slave" will become a designation that Crabbe will apply to victims of enclosure, who, he contends, share a kind of alienation with Africans. Anti-slavery poetry written from 1787 to 1791 will then be situated within the antipastoral tradition. Olaudah Equiano's *An Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa the African* (1789-94), the first full-length narrative in English written by an African, paints a picture of the author's native land that closely conforms to an Eden found in British literature, describing his enslavement according to

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<sup>32</sup> Low, 11.



techniques found both in English travel narratives and in contemporaneous anti-slavery poetry. His solution for ending slavery is similar to other anti-slavery agitators such as Hannah More and Mary Birket: expand British markets into Africa, and instate Africans as commercial partners rather than slaves. The imperialism of such rhetoric will be contextualized as an aspect of a resistant georgic mode.

Argumentation in anti-slavery writing is grounded in a discourse of ownership; slaves have been torn from land which they owned, and any remediation must address their material needs. But for women like Charlotte Smith, "ownership" must be conceived in a less material fashion because the legal system had never afforded opportunities for conventional proprietorship. Smith's first volume of the *Elegiac Sonnets* (published in six editions from 1784 to 1792) represents her dispossession not just from her childhood estate of Bignor Park in the Sussex, but from the intimate relationship she enjoyed there with nature. My third chapter, therefore, locates the elegiac quality of her sonnets from the 1784 editions within a tradition that laments the loss of pastoral—a loss at first not explicitly identified with economic and patriarchal oppression, but rather attributed to an excessive personal sensibility. The chapter then maps the incremental changes that Smith makes to each edition of the sonnets, showing a gradual transformation in her poetry. In 1786, she introduces a rugged landscape as a metaphor for her sense of alienation. From that point, with each edition's group

of added sonnets, her representation of exile—which she ties to an inauguration of history——increasingly correlates with antipastoralist patterns, evincing a direct relationship between the growing number of hostile natural settings and the association of these settings with social injustice. As in other women's antipastoral poetry before her, such as that of Mary Leapor and Mary Collier, she portrays labor as a degeneration from a pastoral to a grueling postlapsarian era.

With Smith's fifth edition of the sonnets in 1789, she widens the scope of her depiction of social injustice, transforming it into a broader, cosmic force. Once a nurturing hand, now external nature tears up bones from their graves, exposing every aspect of human existence to destruction. Human oppression takes the role of an irrepressible power in *The Emigrants* (1793) as she imports the image from the *Georgics* of Mars riding sublimely over the landscape with decimated fields in his wake. The occasion of *The Emigrants* is the flight of French refugees—forced from their lands during the Reign of Terror—to which Smith likens her own estrangement in British society. Calling herself an "involuntary exile" like them, the poet explores the nature of exile in both possible senses: in the way that the corporeal landscape has been reft from its restorative capacities, and in the sense of graphing a mindset of alienation.

While both Equiano and Smith attribute "alienation" to social oppression, the subject of my fourth chapter, William Wordsworth, transitions this sense of alienation into the psychological

realm, which we can see in two significant, simultaneous changes after 1797 in his writing. Prior to 1797 some of Wordsworth's characters are located in a conventional pastoral setting, and as in Charlotte Smith's sonnets, they suffer a loss of *otium*. But with *The Ruined Cottage* in 1797, Wordsworth redefines the golden age of leisure into one of healthy, hard work, a shift that Graver, as he reads 1800's "Michael, a Pastoral Poem," calls a "georgic pastoral." However, Graver's research into Wordsworth's alterations does not account for a second important change in his poetry. At the same time that the prelapsarian age becomes an era of labor, Wordsworth also revises how he accounts for the material problems of rural life. In *The Salisbury Plain* in 1795 he declared a need for radical social change, but after 1797 he softens the scene from earlier, vivid representations of suffering to a tableau subdued by nature's "silent overgrowings." This narrative manipulation has been decried as a "displacement" of historical conditions by Jerome McGann; as such it constitutes the basic ideological action of Romantic poetry. Chapter four of this dissertation aims to contextualize this ideological move within the tradition of the bucolic process that Wordsworth reacted against.

The effect of these two simultaneous changes is a transfer in the site of alienation from the external, social world to an internal, psychological realm. While Heinzelman has claimed that the "silenced and/or forgotten" mode of georgic writing became a base for the institution of Romanticism, I will argue in chapter

four that on the contrary, Wordsworth's "pastoral" is countergeneric to what preceded it. His new kind of pastoral, evident in *The Ruined Cottage*, "Michael," and *Home at Grasmere* (1800-1806), is not a synthesis of the antithetical modes of orthodox georgic and antipastoralism, but rather he squeezes out the material concerns expressed in the antipastoralist mode, displacing them with a spiritualized doctrine of a union of the mind and nature.

I will offer *Home at Grasmere* as a dramatic example of the sealing of the internal pocket discussed above. In *Grasmere*, Wordsworth's New Eden, suffering must be displaced—literally, it must be forgotten. Forgetfulness, then, completely rewrites the three aspects of the antipastoralist mode—ownership, alienation, and labor: land ownership is replaced by a notion of the growth of the poet's mind<sup>33</sup>; alienation becomes a psychic

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<sup>33</sup> Wordsworth makes this shift clear in a passage that he incorporates in *The Ruined Cottage* and the *Prelude*. Only the poet-prophet is accorded a sense of possession, and paradoxically his claim (and it is always a "he")—"He had a world about him—t'was his own, / He made it" (87, 88)—is agentialized through the material loss of observed personae, such as Margaret and Robert in *The Ruined Cottage*. Metaphysical possession, then, arises through the work of story-telling, almost parasitically feeding off of another's loss. When the story-telling is necessarily a published, poetic production, a discussion of writing as a product, phrased even as a "georgics of writing," is unavoidable. Clifford Siskin's *The Work of Writing* (1998) takes this move. Although this dissertation will benefit at certain points from his research, I wish to set aside a strict notion of "writing as a product" within the framework of reading texts for their operation within different georgic modes. I find that Siskin leaves room for writing—writing about any subject, so long as there is a labor of the mind that generates a printed text—to become an activity analogous to husbandry. It seems to me that

bifurcation; and labor loses its antipastoral sense of loss, donning the "rosy face" of prelapsarian.

Rather than a comprehensive investigation of the history of antipastoralism in the late eighteenth-century, this dissertation offers chapters two and three as vignettes in the story of two shapes that the antipastoral assumes. The growth of this resistant mode will be documented in the materialist issues of anti-slavery writing; its strategies will be depicted in the landscape of exile in Charlotte Smith; and its burial will be read in Wordsworth's *Grasmere*.

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georgic discourse demands that at the very least, a thematics of land, labor, ownership, nation-building, and Hesiodic theogeny must permeate the text. Baconian "georgics of the mind" and a "georgics of the feelings"—as I will argue in chapter four—have their place in this dissertation's generic dialogue, but these two abstracted senses of "georgic" will be grounded ultimately in a relationship with land.

### Antipastoralism and Imperialism in Anti-slavery Writing

When you make men slaves, you deprive them of half their virtue, you set them, in your own conduct, an example of fraud, rapine, and cruelty, and compel them to live with you in a state of war; and yet you complain that they are not honest or faithful! You stupify them with stripes, and think it necessary to keep them in a state of ignorance; and yet you assert that they are incapable of learning; that their minds are such a barren soil or moor, that culture would be lost on them; and that they came from a climate, where nature (though prodigal of her bounties in a degree unknown to yourselves) has left man alone scant and unfinished, and incapable of enjoying the treasures she has poured out for him! An assertion at once impious and absurd.

—Olaudah Equiano

Investigating whether an oppositional georgic mode exists in late eighteenth-century British literature begins by recognizing the premises of eighteenth-century georgic discourse and then identifying candidates for analysis, whether they be individual texts or groups of works whose rhetorical matrices consistently overlap. The previous chapter organized the relationship of essential bucolic terms (land, labor, ownership, alienation) within a model that combined classical and Christian theories of historical progression (from the pre- to postlapsarian) with cultural imperatives of nation-building. This chapter will argue that contentions between orthodox georgic and one species of antipastoralist writing can be more precisely understood by locating their claims along this model. Undergirded by bucolic conceptualizations, the story of late eighteenth-century

antipastoralism may begin at the flash point of conflict between these two modes.

From 1787 to 1791 Britain experienced a war of words between the defenders of the country's West-Indian planters and advocates for the abolition of slavery. Politically, the disagreement may be read as a clash of irreconcilable positions on the proper means of building the British empire. Aesthetically, where contemporary issues of economics and governance mingle with notions of a national identity formed in part by values of an assumed classical inheritance, the dispute is most accurately characterized as a battle underwritten by georgic conceptions. Proslavery authors do not simply depict Africans as tools in the mechanism of industry or argue that slavery as an institution is somehow "natural." Nor do poets enlisted by the Society for the Abolition of Slavery (founded in 1787) merely counter them with sympathetic appeals to a common humanity.<sup>1</sup> Instead, anti-slavery writers draw from the historical postulates and theogenical assertions of a received bucolic vision, representing fundamentally displaced figures cut off from the *otium* of their lost land and in need of a state-sponsored restoration. However

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<sup>1</sup> For articles that historicize literature surrounding the abolition debate, see *Anti-slavery, Religion, and Reform : Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. Christine Bolt, Seymour Drescher (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980). This book contains three useful articles: "The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832" by James Walvin, 149-62; "Anti-Slavery and British Working-Class Radicalism in the Years of Reform," by Patricia Hollis, 294-315; "Literary Sources and the Revolution in British Attitudes to Slavery," by C. Duncan, 319-34.

these discourses may oppose one another, they draw from the same images of, and attitudes toward, labor; those attitudes are fundamentally "georgic."

By offering anti-slavery writing as a case study of a resistive georgic mode, I will neither catalogue nor even summarize the repartee of the Parliamentary debates, nor will I dramatize the heated exchanges in the popular press as the moment of the ill-fated 1791 vote on abolition grew nigh.<sup>2</sup> My interest is in how this literary mode developed in the eighteenth-century, particularly in how its development permitted protocols peculiar to anti-slavery writing to emerge. My aim in this chapter, therefore, is to offer a revisionary reading of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, the African*—the first full-length narrative in English written by an African—by contextualizing it within both Anglo-

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<sup>2</sup> For first-hand accounts of opposing sides of the Parliamentary debates, consult: 1) William Wilberforce, *The Speech of William Wilberforce, Esq., Representative for the County of York, on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 1789, on the Question of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. (London: Logographic Press, sold by J. Walter, No. 169, Piccadilly; C. Stalker, Stationers-Court, Ludgate Street; and W. Richardson, under the Royal Exchange. 1789), 2) Bryan Edwards, Esq. *A Speech Delivered at a Free Conference between the Honourable The Council and Assembly of Jamaica. held the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 1789. on the Subject of Mr. Wilberforce's Propositions I the House of Commons, Concerning the Slave Trade*. (Kingston, Jamaica. London: Re-printed for J. Debrett, opposite Burlington House, Piccadilly. 1790). To read a representative of rhetoric sympathetic to West-Indian planting interests, see Bryan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Late Proceedings of Governement, Respecting the Trade of the West India Islands with the United States of North America*. 2d ed., corrected and enlarged. (London: T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1784).



produced anti-slavery poetry and within the larger body of antipastoral poetry that had shaped forms of protest about land issues in Britain for over twenty years. Anti-slavery writing, I contend, extended out of the response to enclosure in the 1760s, which protested against the entailments of an agricultural process that increasingly relied upon divisions of labor and that therefore had radically reshaped the patterns of rural life in so many localities<sup>3</sup> that the celebrations of trade and progress by what may be called establishmentarian poets seemed obsolete at best.

My discussion begins in 1748 with an explication of how the typical eighteenth-century (orthodox) georgic's program of empire-building is dependent upon shunting issues of human displacement. Antipastoral poetry from 1764 to 1785 exposes those maneuvers as duplicities, and establishes a basic method of protest adapted by anti-slavery writing that was published from 1787 to 1791 (which was written deliberately to sway the vote on abolition). The imperialism of abolitionist agitators such as

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<sup>3</sup> For a case study of the specific ways that enclosure affected one village in a remarkably short time period, see John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 98-109. There, Barrell tells how the village of Helpston was dramatically reformed physically, economically, and culturally between 1809 and 1820 due to the implementation of enclosure legislation. Patterns of life and the landscape literally changed, moving from a circular, communal system of crop-rotation, grazing, and travel to a much more linear order as roads were established along new property lines. Barrell also discusses the nationalizing impact

Equiano, Hannah More, and Mary Birket will then be read in the context of their writings' operation within a georgic mode; their works make the essential georgic claim: good work strengthens the country through an increase in national productivity. Finally, I will discuss a poem published in 1792, which has remained overlooked by scholarship, that explicitly attempts an orthodox georgic performance, but instead succeeds in prefiguring images and issues that become crucial in early Romantic texts.

### Denying Paradise and Labor in Mid-Century Georgic

In 1748 James Thomson converted Spenser's fairy land into a barbaric Britain of pre-history in the second canto of *The Castle of Indolence*. Ranging through the savage landscape is, appropriately, one "Selvaggio":

Rough unpolish'd man, robust and bold,  
But wondrous poor: he neither sow'd nor reap'd. (2.39-40)

No noble savage he, Selvaggio finds Poverty, rapes her, and sires a son who inexplicably has an innate inclination for industry.

Minerva, his tutor, knights the lad and charges him with:

a barbarous world to civilize.  
Earth was till then a boundless forest wild;  
Nought to be seen but savage wood, and skies;  
No cities nourish'd arts, no culture smiled,  
No government, no laws, no gentle manners mild. (2.12-26)

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on the villagers' identity as they thought of themselves as decreasingly local and increasingly "British."

Apparently, Thomson has disinherited his nation from the memory of an Eden. Gone, too, is the gracious, balanced, pre-enclosure idyll of the Virgilian theogeny<sup>44</sup>; boundlessness is only a wilderness, not unending pasture. *Sans Arcadia*, the prelapsarian is notable for what it lacks.

But thanks to the busy hand of Sir Industry, Britain is reformed into a new Eden as he becomes the embodiment of a natural order, restructuring the world from chaos into commercial empire. Under him, "labor conquers all," for the better. Any hint of discomfort in *labor omnia vincit* he turns into a blessing:

Then towns he quicken'd by mechanic arts,  
And bade the fervent city glow with toil;  
Bade social commerce raise renowned marts,  
Join land to land, and marry soil to soil;  
Unite the poles, and without bloody spoil  
Bring home of either Ind the gorgeous stores;  
Or, should despotic rage the world embroil,  
Bade tyrants tremble on remotest shores,  
While o'er the encircling deep Britannia's thunder  
    roars. (2.172-80)

An unadulterated encomium of manufacture and trade, the cities glow with a quickening life-force, not sweat. Wholeness has come, a *concordia discors*, because "either Ind"—that is, the territories and not the West Indians or native laborers of the

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<sup>44</sup> Dryden renders Virgil's vision of a pre-enclosed land in his translation of the *Georgics* (*The Works of John Dryden*. v. 15. [London: Printed for W. Miller, 1808]):

Ere this, no peasant vexed the peaceful ground,  
Which only turfs and greens for altars found:  
No fences parted fields, nor marks nor bounds  
Distinguished acres of litigious grounds;

eastern India— spontaneously seem to yield their "gorgeous stores" without bloodshed. It is remarkable that foreign "despotic rage" can be quelled bloodlessly by Industry, that the thundering canon of Britannia's vessels may sound without the uncertainty of Virgil's uncontrollable Mars being loosed.<sup>5</sup>

Just as *The Castle of Indolence's* denial of a golden age begets an elision of both the identity of the laborer and the consequences of military power, John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1758)

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But all was common, and the fruitful earth  
Was free to give her unexacted birth. (1.191-96)

<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the *Georgics* concludes by acknowledging that the nation's industry can thrive only when the "thundering" of war is held in the distance:

Thus have I sung of fields, and flocks, and trees,  
And of the waxen work of labouring bees;  
While mighty Caesar, thundering from afar,  
Seeks on Euphrates' banks the spoils of war;  
With conquering arts asserts his country's cause,  
With arts of peace the willing people draws;  
On the glad earth the golden age renews,... (Dryden,  
4.807-13)

Caesar may bring home the spoils of war, but there is no delusion in Virgil that he could do so without destruction. The first book of the *Georgics* comes to an end as:

The crooked scythes are straightened into swords:  
And there Euphrates her soft offspring arms,  
And here the Rhine rebellows with alarms;  
The neighbouring cities range on several sides,  
Perfidious Mars long-plighted leagues divides,  
And o'er the wasted world in triumph rides.  
So four fierce coursers, starting to the race,  
Scour through the plain, and lengthen every pace;  
Nor reins, nor curbs, nor threatening cries, they  
fear,  
But force along the trembling charioteer. (Dryden,  
1.684-93)

Thomson's orthodox assertions attempt to deny the brutality that "Brittania's thunder" must bear.

also fills a space made by the suppression of any problematics within capitalism with a similar myth of pre-enclosure Britain. "There was a time," Dyer states, when the country was "sheperdless," when "Inglorious, neither trade nor labour knew" (2.192-94); conveniently, no one was there to be enclosed or displaced. Untamed and unpopulated, the land required the animating discipline of labor and technology:

'Tis Art and Toil  
Gives Nature value, multiplies her stores,  
Varies, improves, creates. (2.183-85).

"Art and Toil" are not only personified but deified; in an aggrandizing creative act, they invest Nature's innate formless matter with order and value, harnessing the wasted potential energy of a chaotic system, which had once "Doom'd the rich and needy, ev'ry rank, / To manual occupation (3.28-29). Dyer's mythos, then, is Hobbesian, and this world-view erases all sense that there is collateral damage when national industries expand. Within the cycle of the bucolic model, Thomson and Dyer effectively remove all acknowledgement of human displacement from Virgilian georgic. Accompanying that removal is the doctrine of a pastoral *otium* that had been ruptured. This may be presented as follows:

[Pastoral (Prelapsarian)—□Rupture □]

(pastoral and rupture are removed)

t p r e  
er

pr e e t  
er e

e r e u t e e t e p r t e e e t  
p t p r e u e t t e t r u u e t t e  
p e t u p e e r t t r e e t r r r e t e  
e r r t e  
p r u t t u t t e *The Fleece* p r t t t t  
e r t e r u r e e t e t e r  
t t t u r e e u e e e t t t e  
p r t e p t t e r

t p e t u r e e  
t u r e e e r p r t r e r u e  
t e r u e r t e t r r u  
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e r t e t e r t u e u p e e p  
t t e t e t e t u r e p r r t r e u p u t

a tangle of thorniness into "curious woofs." The unprincipled energy of a wilderness of "rude materials" in the poem is woven into "graceful folds," the very purple robes of the king, and set upon the shoulders of George, consummate symbol of orthodoxy.

This argument, characteristic of what I call "mercantile georgic," would be undermined if pre-industrial spaces were granted any semblance of purposefulness. We see Dyer holding this kind of threat at bay in his portrait of Africa. When a fleet of ships laden with wool sails to the African coast to trade its goods, the poet takes the occasion to remark upon Britain's use of slave labor. In doing so, he imports proslavery arguments from travel writers like William Smith and William Snelgrave, who published widely-read descriptions of the Guinean coast in 1745 and 1734 respectively.<sup>6</sup> For both these naval captains, Guinea is a savage and technologically "unimproved" region, comprised of "an indolent sort of people" who, according to Smith, have no need to work:

Nature has afforded them all Necessaries proper for the Support of Life, without any great Art of Industry of their own; the Ground in this Part of the Earth, seems, in some Measure to be exempt from the general

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, William. *A New Voyage to Guinea: Describing the Customs, Manners, Soil, Climate, Habits, Buildings, Education, Manual Arts, Agriculture, Trade, Employments, Languages, Ranks of Distinction, Habitations, Diversions, Marriages, and whatever else is memorable among the Inhabitants*, 2 ed. (London: John Nourse, at the Lamb without Temple-Bar, 1745).

Snelgrave, William Capt. *A New Account of some Part of Guinea, and the Slave-Trade*. (London: James, John, and Paul Knapton, at the Crown in Ludgate Street, 1734).

Curse...[A]n upholsterer, though never so good a workman, may starve among them. Nor is there any Work for the Cooper. (28)

Rather than a natural bounty signifying a realm of pastoral pleasance, Smith's Africa is marked by a lack of progress, condemned for its uselessness as a civilization. Captain Snelgrave goes further: those Africans whom Europeans remove from such ill-development personally benefit for being sold into slavery. Although he admits that:

to traffick in human Creatures, may at first sight appear barbarous, inhuman, and unnatural; yet the Traders herein have as much to plead in their own Excuse, as can be said for some other Branches of Trade, namely, the Advantage of it: And that not only in regard of the Merchants, but also of the Slaves themselves.... (160)

The Africans who have been seized as slaves, he explains, had already been taken captive in intertribal warfare and would have been inhumanly destroyed were it not for the saving actions of the traders. Thanks to the merchants, "great Numbers of useful Persons are kept in being" (161), a sentiment echoed by Dyer:

...yet the valued trade,  
Along this barb'rous coast, in telling, wounds  
The gen'rous heart, the sale of wretched slaves;  
Slaves by their tribes condemn'd, exchanging death  
For life-long servitude; severe exchange!  
These till our fertile colonies, which yield  
The sugar-cane, and the Tobago-leaf,  
And various new productions, that invite  
Increasing navies to their crowded wharfs. (4.192-200)

Certainly "wretched" and "severe exchange" renders a level of sympathy for the slaves—or on the other hand, perhaps Dyer's



dearest sympathies lie with the one who is "wounded": the English reader with the "gen'rous heart" that has been touched at the "telling" of the slaves' conditions. Our concerns should not be too grave, though, since the slaves were "by their tribes condemn'd," and now are bestowed a usefulness in making "various new productions, that invite/ Increasing [*British!*] navies to their crowded wharfs." Thus, even when the orthodox georgic admits that dispossession occurs, any uneasiness is calmed at the assurance of the nation's improvement through commerce.

James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764) shows us the clearest example of orthodox georgic sidelining the complications of dispossession. As Grainger's poem instructs an Englishman who has just arrived in the West-Indies on selecting the best land for cultivation and managing his slaves, the means of improvement that the poet offers calls itself into question. Expectedly, the symbolic value of the islands' rich soil has no remnant of an idyllic past; the closest it approaches to associating the Caribbean to pastoral is a claim that the land has more commercial potential than did Arcadia. To exploit that potential, landowners must take (once again) a savage place and subject it, *as well as its laborers*, to reason and intelligence:

As art transforms the savage face of things,  
And order captivates the harmonious mind;  
Let not thy Black irregularly hoe:  
But, aided by the line, consult the site  
Of thy demesnes; and beautify the whole. (1.266-70)

*The Fleece* kept the West-Indian off the stage, substituting the idea of a country ("Ind") to be unified with Britain through trade. Here, even though Grainger deals directly—although not forthrightly—with the workers themselves, he cannot bring concord into the discordant elements that his poem enjoins. One must wonder whether the image of captivation at line 267 struck him as odd, in any sense, with its proximity to the "Black" in the subsequent line. Grainger's advice is curious, to say the least, when he later counsels a noble nabob to treat his slaves with dignity:

Be pious, be industrious, be humane;  
 From proud oppression guard the labouring hind.  
 Whate'er their creed, God is the Sire of man,  
 His image they... (l.631-34)

His ostensibly egalitarian admonitions lie in patent, unresolved contradiction with the means of his didactics on profit-taking, whatever the cost.

Rather than exposing the obvious and inherent racism of such poems, my aim is to show what happens when a poet defines "ownership" of land without properly accounting for the displacement it may cause. Whether that displacement is found in the slave trade or in relocations that arise from enclosure, a gap appears that cannot be closed. More generally stated, when a writer ignores the consequences of separating workers from the benefits of their produce—as Thomson, Dyer, and Grainger do—the result is a genre that collapses from its own self-indictment. The georgic stops working because it no longer rings true. This,

to my thinking, is a more credible explanation for the demise of formal, orthodox georgic than Kurt Heinzelman's suggestion that the poetry became over-identified with the personality of George III.<sup>7</sup>

In the fourth book of the *Georgics* Virgil advises how to choose and care for oxen. Grainger tries to emulate the master (in more ways than one) by discussing the selection and care of Africans. At best, the result is nonsense. He laments the bondage of the "Genius of Africk," for his muse grieves to see men in fetters, wishing only for "freedom to the race of man" (4.16). Yet somehow the muse can also with "mild instructions teach...what care the jetty African requires" (4.30-35). Slavery is apparently a necessary part of life, at least for the Englishman. Only 60 lines away from an appeal for universal liberty, the poem descends to the auction block, lending tips on how to pick a good slave. Make them roll their eyes, stick out a red tongue, swell their chests, and ensure that their bellies are not distended (4.74-76). Take care to "buy not a Cormantee" because people from this tribe are "born to freedom in their native land, / [and] Chuse death before dishonourable bonds" (4.84-85). Clearly, a slave is not to be trusted if he or she values liberty as much as the poet. Most problematic is

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<sup>7</sup> In "Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33:2 (Summer 1991), 191.

Grainger's admission that men who were once proprietors are now property. He makes a plea for their sympathetic treatment:

Yet, planter let humanity prevail.—  
 Perhaps thy Negroe, in his native land,  
 Possess large fertile plains, and slaves, and herds:  
 Perhaps, whene'er he deign'd to walk abroad,  
 The richest silks, from where the Indus rolls,  
 His limbs invested in their gorgeous pleats:  
 Perhaps he wails his wife, his children, left  
 To struggle with adversity: Perhaps  
 Fortune, in battle for his country fought,  
 Gave him a captive to his deadliest foe:  
 Perhaps, incautious, in his native fields,  
 (On pleasurable scenes his mind intent)  
 All as he wandered; from the neighbouring grove,  
 Fell ambush dragg'd him to the hated main.—  
 Were they even sold for crimes; ye polish'd, say!  
 Ye, to whom Learning opens her amplest page!  
 Ye, whom the knowledge of a living God  
 Should lead to virtue! Are ye free from crimes?  
 (4.211-28)

Grainger charges some of his readers with hypocrisy by using Snelgrave's claim that slaves are often transported as criminals from their own countries. Nonetheless, even though he acknowledges that slaves were once landowners, even patriotic warriors who mourn the loss of wife and child, he funnels this acknowledgment into a "fond ambition" to "knock off the chains / Of heart-debasing slavery" (4.235-36). It would be optimal if:

Servants, not slaves; of choice, and not compell'd;  
 The Blacks should cultivate the Cane-land isles. (4.242-43)

But such a dream bows to the imperative to supply the homeland with sugar products. Industry "shall not crouch; if these Cane ocean-isles, / Isles which on Britain for their all depend," are

going to perpetuate the nation's commercial "golden age" (4.673-74).

### Enclosure and Slavery in Antipastorlism

After the mid-eighteenth-century many travel narratives were published that took previous claims of an indolent, barbaric Africa to task. Dutch trader William Bosman's *New and Accurate Account of the Coast of Guinea* (1721)<sup>8</sup> is representative of the earlier depictions of Africans as "fraudulent and villianous without exception" who will "try to cheat a European at every turn" (100). Quaker businessman Anthony Benezet returned to England, however, in 1773 with stories of the mildness, honesty, and diligence of natives of the Gold and Ivory Coasts, which was adumbrated by Granville Sharp in 1776.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, from the mid-1760s to mid-1770s, various writers began to publish poetry that unmasked the disingenuousness of many of the

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<sup>8</sup> Bosman, William. *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts*. Written originally in Dutch by William Bosman, Chief Factor of the Dutch at the Castle of St. George d'Elmina. And now faithfully done into English. 2 ed. (London: J. Knapton, D. Midwinter, et. al., 1721).

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Benezet counters Bosman in *Brief Considerations on Slavery, and the Expediency of its Abolition. with some Hints on the Means wherby it may be gradually effected*. (Burlington, NJ: Isaac Collins; 1773). Granville Sharpe (1735-1813) doubtlessly benefited from Benezet's findings, publishing *The Just Limitation of Slavery* (London, 1776). For a later and highly influential tract, see Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: 1786).

assumptions made by those dedicated to market expansion. Against the motto of "industry conquers all," culturally orthodox programs of "improvement" were revealed as arbitrary and tyrannical. At home, aristocratic landlords whose consolidation of farmland through acts of enclosure—hailed elsewhere as "improvers"—were retitled by some middle-class poets as "tyrants," while abroad, slave ship owners and their underlings were denounced as "white devils." The protests of those sympathetic to the plight of the slave and the displaced laborer overlapped both chronologically and rhetorically. Taking up elements of the orthodox georgic, these writers shifted its emphasis on land ownership from a didactics on productivity to an elegiac appeal to reinstate those who had lost their land. Much as the antipastoral moments in *Eclogues* one and nine explored in the previous chapter, their calls for the restitution of slaves or rural workers always entailed an assertion that an innocent, pleasant age had been ruptured. I wish to chart this emerging mode of antipastoral writing through four poems: Charles Churchill's *Gotham* (1764), Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), Thomas Chatterton's "Heccar and Gaira: an African Eclogue" (1770), and George Crabbe's *The Village* (1785).

*Gotham* is an acidic satire on the arbitrary nature of monarchical imperialism. As poet and maker, Churchill invents a fictitious, faraway island over which he asserts his rule since, after all, he is the first European to pay it any notice. Naming

it "Gotham" because the name suits his fancy, he makes himself king, emblazons his royal name on every Gothamite law, and promptly commits the most Christian of acts: he enslaves the Gothamites. (Besides, he argues, if Christians did not enslave the people they discover, half the known world would be overthrown (1.26).) Churchill then quickly moves to justifying his actions by arguing that slavery is a necessary force in civilizing barbaric people, no matter how it may happen to contradict the actual teachings of Christ:

For never yet might any monarch dare,  
Who lived to truth, and breathed a Christian air,  
Pretend that Christ, (who came, we all agree,  
To bless his people, and to set them free)  
To make a convert ever one law gave  
By which converters made him first a slave. (1.27-32)

One must overlook such fine points to realize the larger advantage of slavery:

Happy, thrice happy, now the savage race,  
Since Europe took their gold, and gave them grace!  
(1.67-68)

Indeed, Gothamites must surely be savage, the narrator ironically claims, because no right-thinking civilized man could sell his fellow citizens "for a bit of glass" (1.44). It is irrelevant, of course, that slave traders demand the sale; falling for such ruse must prove the Gothamites' barbarity.

In lampooning such rhetoric, Churchill counters the widely-circulated claim Smith's *A New Voyage to Guinea*, which recounts the story of God giving black and white men a choice between obtaining wisdom or gold. White men's choice of wisdom in the

legend is rewarded by global domination, while the Guineans choice of gold has doomed them to become slaves, eternally punished for their original avarice (28). *Gotham's* parody exposes this transparent proslavery rationalization, implying that the source of avarice and its rapacious commerce (disguised as "improvement") lies in Europe. Churchill reverses the process found in *Dyer* where toil causes plenty to rise from a waste of thorns. *Gotham's* ruler decrees:

Where yellow harvests rise be brambles found;  
Where vines now creep let thistles curse the ground.  
(2.283-4)

The site of displacement is hardly a wilderness desperate for the civilizing hand of trade.

The satirical proclamation quoted above is a shrewd maneuver on Churchill's part. The history of European intervention, the poet infers, has carried the effect of a curse, but the curse of commerce itself has been couched in axiomatic language, packaged in the delusory wrappings of a "natural order." In this way, the agents of empire have explained away the damage that their enterprises have caused, always justifying their actions by invoking deep, universal principles. Churchill therefore denaturalizes displacement, making demystification the project of his poetry:

to prove, that by no act  
Which Nature made, that by no equal pact  
'Twixt man and man, which might, if Justice heard,  
Stand good; that by no benefits conferr'd,  
Or purchase made, Europe in chains can hold  
The sons of India, and her mines of gold. (1.92-96)



We can see *Gotham's* tactic of attributing destruction to alleged "improvements" continued in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*.<sup>10</sup> The mythic, bucolic vision of history—with its sense of inevitable movement from pastoral, through rupture, to postlapsarian—is re-imagined in the poem through fate of Goldsmith's fabled village, Auburn. There, pre-industrial space is reinvested with *otium* only to be spoiled by the encroachments of enclosure. Once a place of pleasure, love, and rural productivity, Auburn functioned in a harmony of land and labor:

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,  
When every rood of ground maintained its man;  
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,  
Just gave what life required, but gave no more.  
His best companions, innocence and health;  
and his best riches, ignorance of wealth. (57-62)

Here, there is no reign of Selvaggio, no need for Sir Industry, and no wasting of raw materials; rather, Goldsmith provides a pastoral balance disrupted by a severing of owners from ownership.

Instead of a wilderness that begs to be reshaped by labor, the brambles that overgrow cottages "[b]eside yon straggling fence that skirts the way, / With blossomed furze unprofitably gay" (193-4) are compared to an adjacent pleasure ground whose:

splendours rise  
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprize,  
While scourged by famine from the smiling land,  
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;

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<sup>10</sup> *The Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*. v. 4. Ed. by Arthur Friedman. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 287-304.

And while he sinks without one arm to save,  
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave. (207-302)

Goldsmith erects an inverse relationship between commodification and the well-being of rural workers, which in one passage directly counters Dyer's image of the "royal mantle":

The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth,  
Has robbed the neighboring fields of half their  
growth. (279-80)

In *The Deserted Village*, improvement is not only robbery, but a fault against nature, preventing land from attaining its full productive capacity.

Where Goldsmith situates displacement upon English soil, Thomas Chatterton's "Heccar and Gaira, an African Eclogue"<sup>11</sup> relocates European disruption to an African locale imbued with an exotic mythos that is destroyed by the white man's invasion. Chatterton's title is doubtlessly meant to challenge the conventional Virgilian pastoral; he supplants easy pastures with a sublime landscape "Where the sharp rocks, in distant horror seen, / Drive the white currents through the spreading green" (3-4). A picture of a reclining Tityrus is forced aside by two warriors, Heccar and Gaira, who lay down momentarily during a break in battle against white soldiers trying to capture slaves. Savage Africa is conspicuously absent; it is neither in the unspoiled land nor in the neo-classical heroic couplets in which

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<sup>11</sup> *The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton*. v. 1. (London: George Bell, Covent Garden, 1875).

Heccar and Gaira address each other. Heccar praises his comrade in arms for turning back the invaders, at least for the moment:

When Gaira the united armies broke  
 Death winged the arrow, Death impelled the stroke,  
 See, piled in mountains on the sanguine sand,  
 The blasted of the lightnings of thy hand. (34-37)

The high style resists English stereotypes of barbaric natives as it transforms them into classical, idealized forms. Even the story of Helen's capture from Menelaus is suggested when Gaira reveals that the war began when his wife Cawna, "the companion of my rest," was stolen. "Heccar," he cries, "my vengeance still exclaims for blood, / 'Twould drink a wider stream than Caigra's flood" (26-27). Subtly and effectively, the poem redirects its readers' sympathies against the assaultive Europeans, since they have invaded the paradise of another nation out of commercial greed.

In my effort to join poems that discuss issues of displacement that pertain to both slavery and enclosure, I have been characterizing antipastoralism as the reinstitution of a lost pastoral and an invalidation of orthodox claims of improvement through industry and progress. George Crabbe's *The Village*<sup>12</sup> conforms to this basic design as it asks, "Where are the swains who, daily labour done, / With rural games play'd down the setting sun" (93-94). Throughout the stretches of England's countryside, the "simple life that Nature yields" has been

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<sup>12</sup> *The life and poetical works of ... George Crabbe*. (London, J. Murray, 1847).

"usurp'd" by "Rapine and Wrong and Fear" because once-honest farmers are now hired by smugglers. *The Village*, however, breaks the predictable patterns of previous antipastorals; it is the first canonical work that I can find that gives the name "slavery" to the eviction and alienation of English rustics. When "the lawless merchant of the main / Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain" (89-90) to embroil him in a smuggling operation; when the excesses of aristocratic life are shown to grind down the rural workers who must support a system of commodification; when the poor receive no benefit from a life of arduous work; Crabbe calls the result "slavery." "Slave," in fact, is the most recurring descriptor for rural workers in the poem, next to the more general epithet "the poor."<sup>13</sup> Landowners in *The Village* are called "masters," whose state of luxury should "own that labour may as fatal be / To these thy slaves, as thine excess to thee" (152-53). The weary poor man who "journeys to his grave in pain" is a "slave" commanded by various masters who make him crouch in servitude (196). Likewise, domestic servants who live in fear of the lords they serve are "slaves [who] advance / With timid eye to read the distant glance" of their masters (252-53). The evil that has invaded Crabbe's village is

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<sup>13</sup> "Slave" or "slavery" occurs six times in *The Village*, whereas two other terms that refer to the oppressed rural class ("peasant" and "swain") occur five times each. Forms of "the poor" arise 12 times.

an unhealthy system of exchange, an inequitable transfer of property from one group to another.

### Antipastoralism in Anti-slavery Writing

Crabbe's treatment of "slavery" in 1785 as a loss of ownership at the hands of organized tyranny is adopted by anti-slavery writers in 1788. Prior to the end of the 1780s, poetic characterizations of Africa as a modern-day Eden circulated in the margins of British literary culture, as the obscurity of Churchill's *Gotham* and Chatterton's African eclogues testifies. But when the slavery issue became an unavoidable feature of public discussion, anti-slavery writers borrowed procedures of resistive literature. Turning to Hugh Mulligan's *Poems, Chiefly on Slavery and Oppression*, Edward Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues*, and William Roscoe's *The Wrongs of Africa* will demonstrate how anti-slavery poetry is situated within the antipastoral tradition. I will then show how Equiano's *Interesting Life*, the leading anti-slavery publication of its era, worked within the antipastoral mode of British poetry that preceded it.

Mulligan's *Poems*<sup>14</sup> is a collection of eclogues set in various locations around the globe, and each poem is supplemented by extensive endnotes that serve as a kind of anthology of anti-

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<sup>14</sup> *Poems chiefly on slavery and oppression, with notes and illustrations*. (London: printed for W. Lowndes, 1788).

slavery essays and travel narratives. One of these notes reproduces one of the most repeatedly published quotations in anti-slavery literature: a description of Gambia by Michel Adanson (1727-1806),<sup>15</sup> the correspondent to the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris from 1749-53. Mulligan reproduces Adanson's characterization in a note to "The Slave, an American Eclogue":

Which way soever I turned my eyes on this pleasant spot, I beheld a perfect image of pure nature: an agreeable solitude, bounded on every side by a charming landscip; the rural situation of cottages in the midst of trees; the ease and indolence of the Negroes, reclined under the shade of their spreading foliage; the simplicity of their dress and manners; the whole revived in my mind, the idea of our first parents, and I seemed to contemplate the world in its primeval state (54). (243)

We can see the marks of pastoral: "ease" abounds, people are "reclined under the shade" like an entitled Tityrus, and their position in this paradise is Christianized in their similarity to Adam and Eve. A subsequent endnote to "The Slave" cites a Mr. Brue, another French explorer, who emphasizes Africa's agricultural bounty:

The farther you go from the sea, the more fruitful and well-improved is the country, abounding in pulse, Indian corn, and various fruits. Here are vast meadows, which feed large herds of great and small cattle....I was surprized to see the land so well cultivated; scarce a spot lay unimproved....As to the Grain and Ivory-Coast, we learn from eye-witnesses, that the soil is in general fertile, producing

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<sup>15</sup> *A voyage to Senegal, the isle of Goree, and the river Gambia. translated from the French. With notes by an English gentleman, who resided some time in that country.* (Dublin: printed for G. and A. Ewing, et. al., 1759).

abundance of rice and roots...the flocks and herds are numerous, and the trees loaden with fruit.<sup>16</sup>

Mulligan supplies these endnotes to amplify the richness and purity of the homeland of Adala, the protagonist in "The Slave, an American Eclogue." Adala's native country, Mulligan explains, is "esteemed a paradisaical spot, where a happy soil is improved to the utmost, though nature is so benignant in her dispensations, that art has little more to do than barely to prune her superfluities."<sup>17</sup>

The effect of such an amalgam of locodescription suggests that anti-slavery writing is closely associated with, even reliant upon, an important technique in abolition-sympathetic travel narrative: one's attitude towards the dispossessed determines the degree of fruitfulness accorded to the land. Snelgrave and William Smith write of an Africa that is chaotic and unmanageable, but Mulligan's four eclogues function as both antidote to such representations and as an abolitionist's travelogue, providing a globalized conception of oppression as the poems are set in Virginia, Ireland, India, and Africa. "The Slave," placed on a plantation in Virginia, shows how ownership affects one's vision of the land. For the planter:

The green vales with living wealth abound,  
Bright on her fields tho' ripening rays descend,  
And rich with blushing fruit the branches bend. (6-8)

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<sup>16</sup> Endnote to line 46.

<sup>17</sup> Endnote to line 65.

Yet only a "cheerless waste" in which all is "barren" (10), a landscape that is "scorch'd with heat" (92), can be seen by the slave. In "The Lovers, an African Eclogue," the "spoilers pour the cup of woe" (7) in the "[o]nce happy land! Where all were free and blest" (46). "[B]looming bow'rs, / Where youthful virgins tranquil pass'd their hours" (54-55) are ruined by the invasion of "the pallid race."

We can see the importance of this poetry to the political debate over slavery in the 1788 decision by the Society for the Abolition of Slavery to publish a collection of essays and poetry. Its contributors included Edward Rushton,<sup>18</sup> William

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<sup>18</sup> According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*: Rushton (1756-1814):

was apprenticed an the age of eleven to a firm of West-Indian shippers....He afterwards joined as mate in a slaving expedition to the coast of Guinea. The brutal treatment of the captives induced him to remonstrate with the captain, who threatened to place him in irons for mutiny. A little later the whole of the cargo was seized with malignant ophthalmia, and Rushton lost his own sight by exposing himself in relieving the wretched negroes. On his return he incurred the displeasure of his stepmother, and was driven from home to subsist as best he could on an allowance of four shillings a week....He published his 'West India Eclogues' in 1787, and afterwards gave assistance to Thomas Clarkson when collecting evidence on the subject." [Rushton went on to write other poems, become a bookseller, found the philosophical society in Liverpool, and establish the Liverpool Blind Asylum.] ...In 1807, after thirty-three years of blindness, his sight was restored through an operation.... (419)



Roscoe,<sup>19</sup> and Hannah More. Reading these works allows us to recognize a convention that arises out of Crabbe and previous antipastoralists, that of displaying the loss of idyllic land and life by revealing a dispossession that results from an invasive economic tyranny. In the third poem in Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues*,<sup>20</sup> two slaves lament the change from days when they would repose beneath the shade, drink palm wine, and watch their naked children play as their wives prepared the food that they had brought back from the hunt. Their world of domestic tranquility has been destroyed, of course, and in the poem this is evidenced by an elder, wise African slave being lashed to death for dropping a bucket of water. William Roscoe's *The Wrongs of Africa*<sup>21</sup> also attributes the disruption of such harmony to the English, since "by fraud or force / We call his portion ours" (4). Before their lands were stolen, the Africans "never woo'd / A coy and stubborn soil, that gave its fruits / Reluctant" (9), as the African farmer only had to plant and then enjoy watching his crop bear fruit. When he was not at work, the African behaved identically to the rustics of Goldsmith and Crabbe: he amused himself in dancing with his fellow villagers with "bursts

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<sup>19</sup> William Roscoe (1753-1831), according to the *DNB* (222), was active in the Liverpool abolition movement, supported the French Revolution in published songs and odes, established himself as a art historian, and was elected to Parliament in 1806.

<sup>20</sup> *West-Indian Eclogues*. (London: J. Philips, George-Yard, Lombard-Street, and W. Lowndes, Fleet-Street, 1787).

<sup>21</sup> *The Wrongs of Africa*. (London: R. Faulder, 1788).

of laughter, and loud shouts of joy," or perhaps he reposed in some "shady bower" after the hunt. Prior to his enslavement, he had his "aims secure / His brightest arrow, steep'd in keen delights, / To cultur'd minds, and colder skies, unknown" (12). Roscoe's ironic use of "cultur'd" cannot be missed. In his formulation, unspoiled African soil is the site of cultivation, unenslaved Africans live in a British notion of idyllic culture, and the "cultur'd minds" in Europe are governed only by a truly uncultured and culture-destroying dictum of improvement by commerce.

Put more generally, the slave trade forces the African existence of pastoral timelessness with its spontaneously fecund earth into a postlapsarian world with a "coy and stubborn soil." History here restructures the *rerum natura* as it supplants the old productive natural order. Roscoe, therefore, accords this as a fall from good to evil, likening traders to "the first tempter, that in Eden's groves, / Guiltless before, brought sin, and pain, and death" (14). Interestingly, he closes his poem with a metaphorical attack on what can best be considered the mercantile georgic. The "white deceiver" (an obvious analog of Satan) becomes a farmer:

who had sown  
The seeds of discord, saw with horrid joy  
The harvest ripen to his utmost wish;  
And reap'd the spoils of treachery, guilt, and blood.  
(30)

The treatment of land and labor in the first chapters of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) closely echoes images found in contemporaneous British anti-slavery poetry. An extremely popular book, going through nine editions from 1789 to 1794, it mixes a travel narrative with spiritual autobiography, recounting the author's experiences from his birth in 1745 in Ibo (modern Nigeria) to his capture sometime around the age of 10 and his manumission in 1766, to his world-wide travels culminating in an audience with the queen of Britain in 1788 when he appealed to her for slavery's abolition. By the ninth edition, Equiano framed the book with letters of introduction, including an address to both houses of Parliament, and concluded with the letter he presented to the queen. From beginning to end, then, the *Interesting Narrative* constructs an anti-slavery argument, and I will show that the heart of its narrative derives its force from antipastoralist rhetorical maneuvers discussed above.

From his opening chapter Equiano depicts his native land as a pastoral space. According to Vincent Carretta,<sup>22</sup> Equiano's description of "Essaka," his home region in Ibo, is a close (and largely acknowledged) adaptation from the 1788 edition of Benezet's travel book. Both Benezet and Michel Adanson call the land "charming" and "fruitful," and Equiano's first mention of himself takes their modifiers into account: "I was born, in the

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<sup>22</sup> See Carretta's edition of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 271.

year 1745, in a charming fruitful vale, named Essaka" (32).

Every characterization of the land manifests a concept of pre-industrial pleasance: Essaka is a "nation of dancers, musicians, and poets" (34); the land is "uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance" (37);

Essaka's "tillage is exercised in a large plain or common...and all the neighbours resort thither in a body" (39), for "[e]very one contributes something to the common stock; and as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars" (38).<sup>23</sup>

Reminiscent of Goldsmith's Auburn or Crabbe's Village before enclosure, Equiano's people "live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favours, [and] our wants are few and easily supplied; of course we have few manufactures" (37).

Equiano certainly means to appeal to his British readers' sense of a lost paradise. After recounting Ibo's cultural practices such as ceremonial washing, circumcision, and monotheism he remarks:

I cannot forbear suggesting what has long struck me very forcibly, namely, the strong analogy which even by this sketch, imperfect as it is, appears to prevail in the manners and customs of my countrymen, and those of the Jews, before they reached the Land of Promise, and particularly the patriarchs, while they were yet in that *pastoral* state which is described in Genesis....  
(43, my italics)

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<sup>23</sup> Clearly, Equiano is appealing to his reader's sympathies against enclosure, styling himself as descending from a country that shares a similar land-based history as England.

Far from being tainted with what proslavery propagandists called the "curse of Ham," Equiano's Africans are the heirs of an unfallen race.<sup>24</sup> In fact, he actually claims that the Ibo are descendants of Abraham:

Indeed this is the opinion of Dr. Gill, who, in his commentary on Genesis, very ably deduces the pedigree of Africans from Afer and Afra, the descendants of Abraham by Keturah his wife and concubine.... (44)

Two other theologians are cited for corroboration. Essaka is not just symbolically a pastoral world, but genealogically, culturally, and physically as well.

Just as in the antipastoral, the purity of his native way of life is always set against the corruptive pressure of commerce. Being a "people of little commerce," (32) Essakans "live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favours, our wants are few and easily supplied" (37). The "uncommonly rich and fruitful" land grows produce "without culture" as a "blessing of nature" (37), which precludes any need for trade. He argues that trade, in general—and the slave trade in particular—comes from a lack, an inability to meet one's own desires. Significantly, his representation of European commerce is consonant with Roscoe's image of the "white deceiver":

When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and *tempts* him with his wares. It is not extraordinary, if on this occasion he yields to the *temptation* with as little firmness, and accepts the price of his fellow creature's liberty with as little

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<sup>24</sup> See Carretta's note, 284 for a history in eighteenth-century writing of "the curse of Ham."

reluctance, as the enlightened merchant. (39, my  
italics)

Were it not for the temptation of an evil brought into the  
"charming, fruitful vale" of Essaka, there would be no battles,  
no theft, no avarice.

After Equiano tells of his capture, his world-view changes in  
a similar fashion to the antipastoral's shift from a natural,  
peaceful harmony to one where a tyrant assumes an almost divine  
omnipotence, which can be seen in the Narrative's four Miltonic  
quotations, all from the first two books of *Paradise Lost*. The  
author consistently portrays himself in a living hell. For  
instance, during a battle in the Seven Years' War, he goes ashore  
and is caught in artillery crossfire. The explosives are "wing'd  
with red lightning and impetuous rage," borrowing from Milton's  
description of the sulfurous hail that falls onto the demonic  
council. Equiano positions himself as though he is in hell,  
being threatened by an enemy with the power of God. Several  
pages later when his escape attempt from his ship is discovered  
and he is about to be sold again at Montserrat, he borrows four  
lines from book one of *Paradise Lost* (1.65-68) which describes  
Satan's first view of hell as he enters it. Compared to his  
placid life in Essaka, Equiano implies that he has been forced  
out of heaven, and is now about to be exiled by one who acts with  
absolute power. In the ten pages that follow, he illustrates the

misery of a slave's life with the lines that import the demons' first view of hell:

With shudd'ring horror pale, and eyes aghast,  
They view their lamentable lot, and find  
No rest! (107)<sup>25</sup>

This, combined with another borrowing from Milton warning the slave owners of a possible insurrection by adapting Beelzebub's promise for revenge at 2.332-40, demonstrates the degree to which Equiano aims to show slaves as being cast-off from paradise by tyrants who usurp the position of God.

My attempt to ground *The Interesting Narrative* in the antipastoral writing tradition that surrounded its publication could be misconstrued as a lack of recognition of the African-authored writing that preceded Equiano. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Paul Edwards, Susan Marren,<sup>26</sup> and many others have well documented Equiano's debt to the few previous black writers in English. The two most common subjects in criticism are Equiano's trope of the talking book and constructions of the slave's voice in an oppressive, silencing culture. However, there is no antecedent in any works by black authors for Equiano's conceptualization of Africa as an invaded pastoral space that suffers a corruptive

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<sup>25</sup> *Paradise Lost* 2.616-18. The second line in Milton is actually: "View'd first their lamentable lot, and found."

<sup>26</sup> See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Slave's Narrative*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). In that volume, also consult Paul Edwards, "Three West African Writers of the 1780s" 175-98. See Susan Marren "Between Slavery and Freedom: The Transgressive Self in Olaudah Equiano's Autobiography." *PMLA* 108(1):94-105. 1993.

movement from the pre- to postlapsarian. Previous African writings describe general notions of displacement, of course, but none of them situate displacement in the complicated way that Equiano does—as the point of rupture, the description of which serves as a simultaneous, explicit critique of commercial practice. Equiano could only inherit this writing strategy from the antipastoral poets and anti-slavery travel writers that he certainly read.

According to Vincent Carretta's anthology of eighteenth-century black writers, only six authors were published in England before Equiano.<sup>27</sup> (Briton Hammon and Jupiter Hammon are the first Africans known to have published in English; in 1760 the former published a short *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man in Boston in 1760*, which never mentions Africa. The latter published a short poem on Christian salvation in 1760, and a poetic address to Phillis Wheatley in 1778. Neither poem deals in any way with Africa or notions of land and labor.) The first Afro-British author's work printed in England is James Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw's *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw, An African prince, as*

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<sup>27</sup> "Introduction." *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Vincent Carretta. (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 1-16. All references to Briton Hammon, Jupiter Hammon, James Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw, Ignatius Sancho, John Marrant, Francis Williams, and Ottobah Cugoano are taken from Carretta's anthology.



*related by Himself*, published in Bath in 1772. Gronniosaw purposes to show his innate knowledge of an eternal God, whom he comes to learn is also omnipresent. His story is therefore a spiritual autobiography that seeks meaningfulness in his suffering as a slave, showing God's hand at work in his life (which emulates the argument of Briton Hammon's narrative). External nature and labor are not part of Gronniosaw's discussion, and there is no hint of his native Africa as a lost paradise. Likewise, a Latin ode by Francis Williams and translated into English by a biased white author, Edward Long in 1774; Ignatius Sancho's letters, published in 1782; and A *Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black*, printed in 1785, make no mention of an Edenic Africa.<sup>28</sup> Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, printed in London in 1773, has been argued to contain a "subversive pastoral" according to John Shields,<sup>29</sup> but her pastoral is not attentive to alienating labor practices. The first extant English language African-authored text that even explicitly attacks slavery as an institution is the *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787) by Ottobah Cugoano.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Marrant describes his spiritual journey and economic trials from his birth in New York until his departure for Nova Scotia as a missionary.

<sup>29</sup> "Phyllis Wheatley's Subversive Pastoral." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27: 4 (Summer 1994), 631-47.

*Thoughts and Sentiments* refutes proslavery arguments, but in doing so it devotes only four paragraphs (less than ten per cent of the total essay) to a narrative of the author's abduction and enslavement. These paragraphs contain no locodescription, no mention of rural labor, no hint of the social fabric of his native environment.

Although Cugoano, as with all other black writers before him, does not invest Africa with any symbolic value within a pre- to postlapsarian progression, he is the first African author to develop slavery as a metaphor—a technique that Equiano and other anti-slavery writers adopt from 1787 on. Proslavery writers had argued that the Bible sanctions enslavement as a natural condition of human existence, which the Israelites themselves supposedly practiced once they conquered Canaan. Cugoano retorts that slavery is rather a result of "the dreadful situation of our universal depraved state, which all mankind lyeth under" (160)—a group which must include the proponents of slavery. Those whom Israel conquered were taken captive not because enslavement is natural to social structures, but on the contrary:

...it was intended and designed thereby, to set up an emblematical representation of their [the Israelites'] deliverance from the power and captivity of sin, and from the dominion of that evil and malignant spirit, who had with exquisite subtilty and guile at first seduced the original progenitors of mankind. (160)

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<sup>30</sup> Cugoano was greatly assisted by Equiano, according to Paul Edwards in "Three West African Writers of the 1780s."

In Biblical history, slavery existed only to "serve for an emblem and similitude of our spiritual bondage and slavery to sin"; it is not "natural and innocent, like that of different colours among men, but as necessary to be made an emblem of what was intended by it..." (160, my emphasis). Cugoano is the first writer that I can find who directly capitalizes on slavery's symbolic value in a refutation of the trade.

### The Georgic Aspect of Anti-Slavery Writing

I have thus far presented a case for reading anti-slavery writing within a larger antipastoral tradition, which—as I argued in chapter one—derives from a resistive mode within the received Virgilian oeuvre. Stopping here, though, would leave us well shy of where anti-slavery writers take their argument (and from 1788 until a year after the abolition vote in 1791, it was a single, well-coordinated argument). Some anti-slavery writers provide only a critique of socioeconomic systems, but other abolitionists offer alternate methods of expanding the nation's markets and building civilizations after the British model. The bulk of proslavery polemic rested upon the supposed impossibility of compensating West Indian planters for their loss of capital in the event of wholesale abolition. As anti-slavery advocates had to demonstrate the economic feasibility of their plan, they faced a difficult task: how does one redefine "improvement" without

attacking capitalism itself? Hannah More, Equiano, and Mary Birket answered that once slavery ceased, new markets could be opened to strengthen the country and spread Christianity and British customs. Their proposals, I contend, are best understood as the only kind of writing that involves issues of land, labor, and nation building: the georgic.

In *Slavery, a Poem* (1788),<sup>31</sup> Hannah More asserts that abolition would lead to a stronger British empire. She asks:

Does thirst of empire, does desire of fame,  
 (For these are specious crimes) our rage inflame?  
 No: sordid lust of gold their fate controls,  
 The basest appetite of basest souls;  
 Gold, better gain'd, by what their ripening sky,  
 Their fertile fields, their arts and mines supply.  
 (125-30)

Empire and a demand for international prestige are not evils *prima facie*, but only "specious crimes"; for advocates of slavery, a "thirst of empire" is a red herring. The true driving impulse is a "sordid lust of gold" by a "WHITE SAVAGE!" (211, her emphasis). Wealth, she admonishes, should be earned by working with Africans to trade for "what their ripening sky, / Their fertile fields, their arts and mines supply" (129-30).

Equiano develops the same scheme in the peroration to his book. With slavery's abolishment, there would "give a most rapid extension of manufactures, which is totally and diametrically opposite to what some interested people assert" because "the landed interests is equal or less in value to the manufacturing

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<sup>31</sup> *Slavery, A Poem*. (London: T. Cadell, in the Strand. 1788).

interests" (234). There is simply more money to be gained by developing Africa than raping her. With the spread of a benign commercial system, "the hidden treasures of centuries will be brought to light and into circulation....Industry, enterprize, and mining, will have their full scope as they civilize" (234). Here it must be noted that Equiano's implication of an uncivilized, pre-industrial Africa is somewhat inconsistent *vis a vis* his initial depiction of Essaka in 1745. Perhaps he considers places like Essaka as ruined by the intrusion of the slave trade and now they need the reparative hand of honest commerce.<sup>32</sup> Thus, "if a system of commerce were established in Africa, demand for manufactures would rapidly grow as the native inhabitants would insensibly adopt the British fashions, manners, customs, etc." (233). Equiano sees economic and cultural imperialism as a virtue that "insensibly" assimilates Africans into the more sophisticated British system. Through the sound policies of capitalism, the wealth of nations may atone for and eliminate the evils of slavery.

He makes this argument by cleverly pitting British manufacturing interests against the slave trade: "In proportion to the civilization [of Africa], so will be the consumption of British manufactures" (233). Abolition:

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<sup>32</sup> Even so, he described Essaka as almost completely self-sufficient in the first chapter. Since the intervening narrative covered his Christian conversion, his missionary plans to Senegal, and work in christianizing the Mosquito Indians, he may

lays open an endless field of commerce to the British manufacturers and merchant adventurers. The manufacturing interest and the general interests are synonymous. The abolition of slavery would be in reality an universal good. (234)

This is certainly an application of Adam Smith's invisible hand where markets are created, suppliers and buyers meet each others' needs—all out of self-interest. Furthermore, he points to the "Aborigines" of Britain who at one time needed very little for clothing, and who are now the leading consumers in the world. If capitalism can respect the principle of ownership and reject the displacement of a people, the productivity of African land will explode, all for the benefit of British consumption:

[I]f blacks were permitted to remain in their own country, they would double themselves every fifteen years. In proportion to such increase will be the demand for manufacturers. Cotton and indigo grow spontaneously in most parts of Africa; a consideration this of no small consequence to the manufacturing towns of Great Britain. It opens a most immense, glorious, and happy prospect—the clothing, &c. of a continent ten thousand miles in circumference, and immensely rich in productions of every denomination in return for manufactures. (235)

Such bold imperialism may well sit uneasily for a postcolonialist reader, as it does with Moira Ferguson, who is troubled by Mary Birket's *A Poem on the African Slave Trade, addressed to her own sex*.<sup>33</sup> Ferguson can only lament the piece's

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see Essaka as lacking the benefits of his new religion and culture.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Birket, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade. Addressed to her Own Sex*. Dublin: W. Corbet, for J. Jones, No. 111, Grafton-Street, 1792.

"panegyric to colonialism" (181), and quotes an especially offensive passage:

No, wise Camillus, search her fertile land,  
 Let the mild rays of commerce there [in Africa] expand;  
 Her plains abound in ore, in fruits her soil,  
 And the rich plain scarce needs the ploughman's toil;  
 Thy vessels crown'd with olive branches send,  
 And make each injur'd African thy friend.  
 So tides of wealth by peace and justice got,  
 Oh, philanthropic heart! Will be thy lot.  
 Plant there our colonies, and to their soul,  
 Declare the God who form'd this boundless whole;  
 Improve their manners—teach them how to live,  
 To them the useful lore of science give;  
 So shall with us their praise and glory rest,  
 And we in blessing be supremely blest;  
 For 'tis a duty which we surely owe,  
 We to the Romans were what to us Afric is now.  
 (12, my italics)

When Ferguson records the above passage, she excises the lines I italicize. Those lines bear georgic assumptions, but they cannot fit into Ferguson's analytical framework. However, when the poem is returned to its historical context and its literary heritage, then if its imperialism remains unsettling, at least it can be explained. In both Dryden's and Warton's imitations of the *Georgics*, Virgil lists "Camillus" as one of the great men who emerged crop-like from Italian soil. When the "mild rays of commerce" are brought to Africa's "fertile land," they are planted just like a seed that will bear fruit for both countries. Birket's notion of commerce is no less than a signifier for an equal and mutually beneficial exchange between two parties who have the right to own land and control their own labor. Significantly, granting a slave's potential to claim self-

ownership in eighteenth-century Britain had everything to do with the African's religious status; the Mansfield case in 1772 allowed slaves on English soil to leave their owners if the slaves had been baptized. Equiano himself makes this argument to one of his would-be owners: "...I have been baptized; and by the laws of the land no man has a right to sell me" (94).<sup>34</sup> Christian faith and commerce were inseparable ingredients in the eighteenth-century recipe for improvement. Indeed, Birket makes an identical contention as Equiano about Anglo "aborigines": "We to the Romans were what to us Afric is now."

#### Epilogue: an Anti-georgic and a Non-georgic

In the time proximate to the vote on abolition, the georgic vision of land, labor, and history was such a powerful paradigm that it saturated poetry in unlikely ways. For example, one month after the defeat of the bill in May 1791, Anna Letitia Barbauld published her *Epistle to William Wilberforce*.<sup>35</sup> Revealing the shock of the magnitude of the legislative defeat—proslavery forces won about two-thirds of the vote—Barbauld's *Epistle* declares that a nation does not grow when it stubbornly persists on living with the institution of slavery; exactly to

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<sup>34</sup> Carretta notes that Equiano's contention at this point in his narrative predates Mansfield by about a decade.

<sup>35</sup> *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. William Mc Carthy and Elizabeth Kraft [Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1994], 114-17.



the contrary, it sickens from the inside out. Barbauld presents Britain as a body whose health, measured by its productive potential, is eaten away by infection, which is reminiscent of Warton's *Georgics* where rats, snakes, and insects threaten to invade and destroy an unsealed granary (1.208-13). Thus, when commerce brings "on essenc'd wings / Breathing unnam'd perfumes" "from the gay East" (86, 87), the body of the nation is infected with products made from slave-based labor, "spreading leprosy [that] taints ev'ry part, / Infects each limb, and sickens at the heart" (98,99). Slavery is a "sure contagion" that courses through the body as a swift fermenting "fiery venom" through the "milky innocence of infant veins" (48,49). When Britain relies on ill-gotten labor:

There wells the stubborn will, damps learning's fire,  
The whirlwind wakes of uncontroll'd desire,  
Sears the young heart to images of woe,  
And blasts the buds of Virtue as they blow" (53-56).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> There is evidence that well before Barbauld wrote the *Epistle*, she imagined slavery as a blight on the body of a nation. Her concept of the nation in her early poetry is decidedly domestic; the sphere of the state is a constitution of individual locales, and the health of Britain is made up of healthy homes. But when a cancer is systematically and repeatedly introduced into the body of the nation, the land is consumed from within. She presents this as an allegorical map which she probably drew in 1774, entitled the "Map of the Land of Matrimony" (*Poems*, 88). A land mass, about the shape of Asia Minor, is depicted on the eastern side of the chart, and men are brought to this territory across the "Ocean of Love" in ships that sail up the River L'Amour, and deep into the region of "Arcadia" and "Eternal Transport." (The map accompanied a poem for her husband on their wedding day, and is intended to be a playful imagining of the conquest and trials of love.) However what I find striking about the map is the slave coast that Barbauld's posits on the northern coast of "the Land of Matrimony." From this coast, which is "Inhabited by Savages," galleons arrive and depart that conduct

The abolition community may have failed in the parliamentary vote in 1791, but it produced a coherent rhetoric that owed a great deal to a georgic mode. One might think that proslavery writers would also look to tap into the textual wealth of the georgic tradition in order to advance their position; only one tried to do so, and he failed. Bryan Edwards was a historian, West Indian plantation owner, member of Parliament, and writer of a volume of poetry published in 1792.<sup>37</sup> During the debates on the floor of the House of Commons Edwards spoke against Wilberforce and printed his remarks in 1790. When he rose to the defense of his fellow nabobs, he declaimed that slavery is a "necessary evil that has existed since the remotest antiquity," for:

Wholly to banish such a system from social life, I fear, therefore is not permitted to us by Divine Providence. Perhaps, like plague, pestilence, famine, and all the various calamities of our condition, it may have been originally implanted in the constitution of the world, for the purposes inscrutable to finite wisdom. (57)<sup>38</sup>

Edwards naturalizes slavery, granting it a divine ordination, an argument that fits hand in glove with the informing spirit of the

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trade and capture slaves. Thus, her map combines representations of the domestic, nationhood, commerce, and labor into a single picture. A similar vision recurs in the *Epistle* when she imagines a British West-Indian woman who comfortably and callously reclines on her sofa at home and puts her slaves to work. This "reclin'd, pale Beauty" who is "Diffus'd on sofas of volumptuous ease" is truly a "monstrous fellowship" that "unite[s] / At once the Scythian, and the Sybarite."

<sup>37</sup> DNB 111.

<sup>38</sup> See Edwards' *Speech* 1790.

last formal georgic written in English, *The Sugar Cane*. Would it not be sensible to compose a georgic poem that demonstrates the great good to the nation that the West Indian culture yields, a poem that could make a counterpart to Wilberforce?

Edwards' *Poems, written chiefly in the West-Indies* contains the poem "Jamaica, a descriptive and didactic poem," which the author states is his attempt to "sketch out a West-Indian georgick in four books, of which the lines now printed constitute the first."<sup>39</sup> The prospectus for the piece promises to sing of:

the productions of the soil, method of cultivation,  
the slavery and superstitions of the African  
negroes,...the great irregularities of nature,... [etc.,  
which] afford rich materials of a Poem, that might  
prove at once original, instructive, pathetic, and  
sublime.

Describing the mountains of Jamaica in the stock language of the sublime, Edwards supposes that it may have once been part of the great lost continent of Atlantis—an effort to classicize the island in the vein of Grainger. Rivers, flowers, birds, reptiles are observed, many of which bear explanatory footnotes that lend a flavor of the travel genre to the poem. In only one place, however, in this 509 line poem do issues of labor and commerce arise. "In the jocund toil" slaves

...waste the unconscious hours; forgot awhile—  
Could slavery but forget—past cruel wrongs,  
And dread of future woes. (157-59)

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<sup>39</sup> *Poems, written chiefly in the West-Indies*. Kingston, Jamaica: Alexander Aikman. 1792.

Oddly, slaves in Edwards' poem are made to sing of their problems:

Soft Ebo nymphs  
Awake the plaintive lay; their own sad fate,  
Torn from their native fields and sable loves,  
Lamenting loud. The hard impending rocks  
Their sighs re-echo, and Agualta flows  
In deeper murmurs. (164-69)

If there is value in these lines—an aestheticization of suffering slaves is hardly admirable—it may be in the re-echoing of the sighs against the rocks. As I will discuss at some length in chapter four, a song of woe that is amplified and even reproduced by the walls of a river canyon has a *locus classicus* in the Orphic song at the end of the *Georgics* Book IV.<sup>40</sup> Certainly, the sorrow of a complaint in which nature combines its own utterances, creating a life that the expression has unto itself, is a peculiarly Romantic event. However, the scene passes, and the remaining lines are personal reflections of the impression of the land upon the author. What is meant to be a georgic results in a non-georgic. Certainly Edwards himself realizes this, even as he introduces the poem:

[the author] had nearly completed the second [book of the poem], when his maturer judgment led him to

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<sup>40</sup> From the Fairclough translation (*Virgil*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1999):

And even when Oeagrian Hebrus rolled in mid-current  
that head, severed from its marble neck, the  
disembodied voice and the tongue, now cold for ever,  
called with departing breath on Eurydice—ah, poor  
Eurydice! "Eurydice" the banks re-echoed, all along  
the stream. (4.523-27)

believe, that he had undertaken a task to which his abilities were not competent.

After Edwards' "Jamaica," I have found no attempt to write a formal georgic in the eighteenth-century.

However, by 1792 others had already been adapting more resistive georgic modes of writing to reflect a sense of alienation faithful to their circumstances. Edwards, for instance, once advised Charlotte Smith to set aside her "sad songs," to which she replied that doing so would betray her disenfranchised condition.<sup>41</sup> For several decades, a few women had appropriated the language of land, labor, and exile, speaking in a more elegiac tone than the anti-slavery writers, but still incorporating antipastoralist strategies. The work of the most popular woman poet of the era, Charlotte Smith, will be studied in the next chapter for her incorporation of antipastoralism.

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<sup>41</sup> Found in the sixth preface (1792) in Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*, which will be discussed at length in chapter three.

### Charlotte Smith and the Nature of Exile

Lyft up thy selfe out of the lowly dust:  
 And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts,  
 Turne thee to those, that weld the awful crowne.  
 To doubted Knights, whose woundlesse armour rusts,  
 And helms unbruized wexen dayly browne.

There may thy Muse display her fluttryng wing,  
 And stretch herselfe at large from East to West:

—Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender*, "October"

In the previous chapter I showed how the orthodox georgic of the mid-eighteenth-century effaced the displacement of rural workers and slaves through capitalistic, axiological assertions. Antipastoralist writing recentered that displacement, with anti-slavery literature of the late 1780s fitting itself into inherited resistant strategies. In countering proslavery economic arguments, abolitionists appropriated the georgic conception of empire-building in their contentions that a slave-free British empire would be stronger and more expansive; new markets and new industries would be created, all to the mutual benefit of African regions and the Commonwealth.

While anti-slavery writers had every incentive to tout commerce as a fortifying agent of a greater nation, not all who were dispossessed by British law could make such claims. With few exceptions, women in the late eighteenth-century faced permanent exclusion from land ownership, and could not conduct their own business affairs without interference. If married, they possessed almost no legal rights over their children, place

of residence, or any earned income without their husband's consent. What could woman writers have gained by waving the banner of imperialism and colonial expansion when any increase in economic productivity decreed as an advance of civilization left their circumstances unaltered? Yet, some women in the eighteenth-century wrote poetry that seeks meaningfulness in the struggle between the worker and the labor system, between their own dispossession and socially-sanctioned entitlements, between their sense of alienation and a threatening natural milieu.

This sort of poetic project is not new, of course; we remember from chapter one that Meliboeus and Moeris experienced similar dilemmas. In the eclogues that Dryden and Warton translated, however, our discomfort is quieted in knowing that these exiled characters stand for Virgil himself, and the relation between the poem and its preceding Argument operates as a marquee of restoration: we are assured that all will be well in the end. What can it mean, then, for a woman bereft of such hope to appropriate the discourse of antipastoralism? What reformulations must take place for her to address issues of land, labor, ownership, and exile?

The poetry of Charlotte Smith is a good place to put these questions to the test. By far the most successful British female poet of the 1790s, her writing is not unrepresentative of other women writers concerned with nature and human toil, such as earlier working-class poets, Mary Collier and Mary Leapor. Like

them, her writing is informed by her exclusion from land ownership, a fact to which the frontispiece of her first publication in 1784 subtly speaks: "Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Essays by Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park, in Sussex."<sup>1</sup> It had been twenty years since Smith lived at Bignor Park, her father's patrimonial estate, having been pressured into an arranged marriage at the age of fifteen. Her dissolute husband Benjamin Smith moved her to poorly kept lodgings in London, to a ramshackle chateau in France—she even joined him in debtors' prison, accompanied by her nine children.<sup>2</sup> After her father-in-law died in 1776 and left her and her children a large sum separate from Benjamin's apportionment, she began a decades-long legal battle to claim her children's inheritance. Estranged from her husband, who quickly squandered his share, and prohibited from obtaining the income that would save her and her children from their poverty, her state of dispossession became the most notorious story of inheritance dispute in the nation at the time.<sup>3</sup> Her sonnets characterize her trials as drudgery, as the result of a degeneration from a pastoral to a postlapsarian state, a slip from a golden age to an age of endless toil.

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Curran, "Introduction." *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*. ed. Stuart Curran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Loraine Fletcher in *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Consult Fletcher 54-62 for details of the circumstances concerning the contested will. Florence Hilbish's 1941



But the sonnets do not do this all at once. Gradually, as Smith adds new sonnets to subsequent editions, her poetry transforms from sentimental elegies in 1784 to a vision of an increasingly threatened wanderer subjected to an inexorable power that has stamped its image into the natural elements. In editions three through six of the *Elegiac Sonnets* (1786 to 1792), Smith's hostile landscapes act as a lens that brings displacement into focus. In 1793 however, her long blank verse poem *The Emigrants* surpasses the *Sonnets'* symbolic use of landscape as an image of personal estrangement; the land becomes an adversary, a brutal, exilic force, universal in its effect. The land attains this power as the vehicle of programmatic social oppression.

We can mark this shift—which I will argue is a transformation from sentimentalism to a highly resistant antipastoralism—not only in her poetry proper, but at the moment she first publicly attributes the nature of her writing (pun intended) to injustice. In the three prefaces to the previous five editions of the *Sonnets*<sup>4</sup>, her biographical references are scant and explicitly guarded.<sup>5</sup> The preface to the sixth edition<sup>6</sup>

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dissertation (University of Pennsylvania) records Richard Smith's entire will.

<sup>4</sup> The first preface, appended to both the first and second editions of 1784, explains that "Some very melancholy moments have been beguiled by expressing in verse the sensations those moments brought." The third and fourth editions were published in 1786 with an eleven line preface that accounts for some of the added sonnets' more Italianate or "legitimate" form.

<sup>5</sup> The preface to the fifth edition reads:

is one-third longer than the previous three combined, devoting its bulk to a record of her conversation with (perhaps) Bryan Edwards<sup>7</sup> in an effusive, first-person justification for the increasingly dreary and disruptive tone of her sonnets. I quote it at length to initiate an investigation of how Smith posits the confluence of antipastoral elements—labor, dispossession, alienation—against an opposite, stifling inertia. When Smith shows her friend the group of sonnets she plans to add in her sixth edition, he objects to:

...the plaintive tone in which they are written, the greater part of those in the former Editions—and that, perhaps, some of a more lively cast might be better liked by the Public—"Toujours perdrix," said my friend—"Toujours perdrix," you know, 'ne vaut rien.' ["Eating partridge every day gets old."]—I am

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In printing a list of so many noble, literary, and respectable names [a list of subscribers follows], it would become me, perhaps, to make my acknowledgments to those friends, to whose exertions in my favor, rather than to any merit of my own, I owe the brilliant assemblage. With difficulty I repress what I feel on this subject; but in the conviction that such acknowledgments would be painful to them, I forbear publicly to speak of those particular obligations, the sense of which will ever be deeply impressed on my heart.

<sup>6</sup> The sixth edition was initially published in 1790 in Dublin, and then in London in 1792.

<sup>7</sup> It is not certain that the "friend" in the sixth preface is Edwards, but there is no record of Smith seeking anyone's opinion of her work but her sister, Catherine Anne [Turner] Dorset, and Edwards. See Florence Mary Anna Hilbish (*Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist 1749-1806*. Dissertation. [University of Pennsylvania], 102), which is still the definitive biography on Smith, and Dorset's biography ("Charlotte Smith." *Miscellaneous Prose Works* v. 4. Walter Scott. [Edinburgh 1834], 38). I refer to Edwards as the friend in the preface only because it makes the discussion somewhat more concrete.

far from supposing that your compositions can be neglected or disapproved, on whatever subject: but perhaps 'toujours Rossignols, toujours des chansons tristes' ["always nightingales, always sad songs"] may not be so well received as if you attempted, what you would certainly execute as successfully, a more cheerful style of composition." "'Alas!' replied I, 'Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?' Or can the effect cease, while the cause remains? You know that when in the Beech Woods of Hampshire, I first struck the chords of the melancholy lyre, its notes were never intended for the public ear! It was unaffected sorrows drew them forth: I wrote mournfully because I was unhappy—And I have unfortunately no reason yet, though nine years have since elapsed, to *change my tone*. The time is indeed arrived, when I have been promised by 'the Honourable Men' who, *nine years ago*, undertook to see that my family obtained the provision their grandfather designed for them,—that 'all should be well, all should be settled.' But still I am condemned to feel the 'hope delayed that maketh the heart sick.' Still to receive—not a repetition of promises indeed—but of *scorn and insult* when I apply to those gentlemen, who, though they acknowledge that all impediments to a division of the estate they have undertaken to manage, are done away—will neither tell me *when* they will proceed to divide it, or *whether they will ever do so at all*. You know the circumstances under which I have so long been labouring; and you have done me the honor to say, that few Women could so long have contended with them. With these, however, as they are some of them of a domestic and painful nature, I will not trouble the Public now; but while they exist in all their force, that indulgent Public must accept all I am able to achieve—'Toujours des Chansons tristes!'" (Curran 5-6)

Ostensibly, she offers this dialogue reluctantly, even under protest, but given its carefully staged rhetoric, we can read this passage as a culminating expression of a resistant mode of writing. Her initial retort to Edwards, that grapes are not gathered from thorns nor figs from thistles, a paraphrase of Christ's warning against hypocrisy in Luke 16.43-45, appropriates

an organic model of deeply embedded personal traits that spontaneously erupt in material form. Cause inexorably leads to effect, although Smith places this cause and effect process in an adversarial setting. Just as Christ offered his metaphor in the face of Pharisaical skeptics, so Smith presents herself akin to Antony at Caesar's funeral as she decries the "Honourable Men" who perniciously keep her in a state of dispossession. Over time, as the nine years go by and the "hope delayed maketh the heart sick," her conceptualization of her poetry evinces a change from a conventional, elegiac pastoral—striking a lyre's chords beneath a beech tree is a stock Virgilian pose<sup>8</sup>—to the fruition of painful labor. The *Chanson tristes* that she presents to Edwards and the "indulgent Public" have become products, she argues, out of contentious circumstances that strive "in all their force" to suppress her claim of ownership and, in Edwards' remonstrance, the portrayal of her alienation. In this excerpt, therefore, we can find what I identified in my first chapter as the quintessential interaction between orthodox and resistant modes of writing: Smith presents her poetry as making claims of her displacement that must be brought into the open, an act the dominant cultural discursive practice seeks to prevent. Her

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<sup>8</sup> Anthony Low reminds us that the beech tree was widely accepted as the Virgilian symbol of pastoral poetry (*The Georgic Revolution*. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985]). The picture of a poet singing about her loss, privately among the beeches in a plaintive tone, is an unmistakable English adaptation of the type of Meliboean / Moeris figure.

interests and her kind of writing are enclosed, sealed within a kind of pocket against her will.

### From Sentimental Elegy to Antipastoralism in the 1784

#### *Sonnets*

Smith's revelation of the cause of her difficulties in the sixth preface follows a progression that we can trace in Smith's first two editions of the *Elegiac Sonnets*.<sup>9</sup> The poems are aptly titled, bearing the ceremonious tone of an elegy in which the speaker mourns the irretrievable loss of an earlier, more pleasant time (Preminger 322). When Smith began writing her sonnets in the late 1770s,<sup>10</sup> she altered an aspect of the tradition of the pastoral elegy. In Theocritus' lament of Daphne, Virgil's fifth and tenth eclogues, some of Petrarch's

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<sup>9</sup> The first and second editions of the *Elegiac Sonnets* were published in 1784 at the price of two shillings. They contained sixteen sonnets and two other poems. These sixteen sonnets were not sonnets 1-16 as found in the *Poems of Charlotte Smith* (ed. by Stuart Curran. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993]) which uses the 1800, 9th edition as the base text for volume one (Curran 313). I shall number Smith's sonnets as found in Curran's edition, and all excerpts will come from this text unless otherwise noted. The 1784 editions present sonnets 1 through 9, then 11 "To sleep," with an interlude of "Chanson par le Cardinal Bernis" (a three stanza poem in French) followed by Smith's "Imitation" of Bernis, and then "The Origin of Flattery." The last six sonnets are three imitations of Petrarch (numbers 14, 15, 16) and three "supposed to be written by Werter" (21, 22, 24).

<sup>10</sup> Dorset (38) wrote that Smith began her compositions after the death of her eldest son in 1777.

sonnets, certain of Spenser's eclogues in the *Shepheardes Calender*, Sidney's *Astrophel*, Milton's *Lycidas*, and Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, for example, the poet finds solace in a sympathetic and weeping natural world.<sup>11</sup> Smith's elegies are an important variation, with nature and the mourner being out of tune with each other. Even as the poems lace the landscape with a documentation of nature's restorative intricacies, the speaker continues suffering without consolation. With a botanical precision that is the hallmark of her work, her second sonnet, "Written at the close of spring," details the garlands of flowers that spring had lately woven; anemones, primrose, hare-bell, violets, and purple orchis, although fading with the change of season, will be wreathed again in future years with Spring's "humid hands."

The sonnets contrast the steady work of nature with the speaker's inability to do much more than dwell on her sorrow. The multifarious particulars in locodescriptive poetry during the eighteenth-century arise from a doctrine of a nature that is always at work, inscribing its own history in geologic formations, patterning the land along its own principles,

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<sup>11</sup>Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 885.

According to Barbara Stafford.<sup>12</sup> "Landscape perception," she states, "is bound up with a sentient earth that finds expression in specific vital forms, in singularities" (58). Smith's nature is a pastoral craftworker, producing delicate, highly differentiated objects that it culls and combines into a sinuousness:

the half-form'd nest  
Of finch or woodlark; and the primrose pale,  
And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round,  
Give their sweet spirits to the sighing gale. (8.4-7)

Although "Another May new buds and flowers shall bring," she is cut off from an age of regeneration, for "happiness [has] no second Spring" (2.13, 14). The products of nature's labor in sonnet 5, "To the South Downs," are reminders of the division of past from present, a disconsoling residue:

Ah! hills belov'd—your turf, your flow'rs remain;  
But can they peace to this sad breast restore,  
For one poor moment soothe the sense of pain,  
And teach a breaking heart to throb no more? (5.4-8)

Her "breaking heart" and "sense of pain" contrast not only with nature's industriousness, but with her own when she roamed the fields of her father's estate. She addresses the South Downs:

Ah! hills belov'd!—where once a happy child,  
Your beechen shades, "your turf, your flowers among,"  
I wove your blue-bells into garlands wild,  
And woke your echoes with my artless song. (5.1-4)

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, "Toward Romantic Landscape Perception: Illustrated Travels and the Rise of 'Singularity' as an Aesthetic Category." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. 10 (1981), 20.

In an earlier age of bliss<sup>13</sup> she mimicked nature's weaving, even weaving her voice into a blending of natural and human sound, as her "artless song" becomes the hills' echoes.

Smith's sorrowers are involved in a peculiar mode of labor; as opposed to nature's productivity, Smith's personae "toil" with no artifact to show for their efforts. Sonnet 4 "To the moon" wishes:

Oh! that I soon may reach thy world serene,  
Poor wearied pilgrim—in this toiling scene! (4.13-14)

Her pilgrims' toil evokes a state of being for "Pale Sorrow's victims" (3.9) as they trudge towards a goal ("thy world serene") that cannot be materially attained. In the first sonnet where she mentions "the rugged path I'm doom'd to tread," she makes clear in a footnote to the poem that there is no escape in life from her grueling world.<sup>14</sup> Just as Smith is highly specific in her botanical cataloguing of nature's effects, so is she also particularly local in her placement of these sonnets in England's

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<sup>13</sup> She acknowledges borrowing from Gray's "Eton College," which later concludes that "where ignorance is bliss, / 'Tis folly to be wise." (Curran 15)

<sup>14</sup> At the last line of the first sonnet, Smith acknowledges borrowing the concluding couplet from Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard." She quotes Pope: "The well-sung woes shall soothe my pensive ghost; / He best can paint them who shall feel them most" (Curran 13). In "Eloisa to Abelard" the speaker hopes for some posthumous relief for his grieving spirit from a future poet (obviously Pope, himself). Smith renders: "Ah! then, how dear the Muses's favours cost, / *If those paint sorrow best—who feel it most!*" Any soothing she receives from her muse comes at a cost, the price of which is the knowledge that she is doomed to



southeastern woods, near the Arun River, no doubt at Bignor Park itself. And yet, in the very place where her sufferers were once at home, they have now become pilgrims, toiling without producing—a disjointedness that she intends to be startling. Now they are doomed to grind out their survival.

In constructing a world where a woman's toil signifies the loss of a pleasant, useful time, Smith follows the antipastoralist precedent of Mary Collier and Mary Leapor. The first published female British working-class poem,<sup>15</sup> Collier's *The Woman's Labour: An Epistle to Mr. Stephen Duck* (1739), defends women's work to Duck's attack in *The Thresher's Labour* (1736) where he charges that "were [women's] Hands so active as their Tongues, / How nimbly then would move the Rakes and Prongs!" (168-69). Asking Duck to "Accept these Lines: Alas! what can you have / From her, who ever was, and's still a Slave?" (5-6), she demands that women are not born to slavery:

Our first Extraction from a Mass refin'd,  
Could never be for Slavery design'd;  
Till Time and Custom by degrees destroy'd  
That happy State our Sex at first enjoy'd. (13-16)<sup>16</sup>

Donna Landry rightly reads this quatrain as an assertion of an "historical process [that] is by no means inevitable," for "[t]here must of necessity have been some historical degeneration

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tread the rugged path. Smith resituates Pope's praise of poetic sensibility into her system of a degeneration from rest to toil.

<sup>15</sup> Donna Landry. *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 56.

from that happy state, so justly designed, in order for human society to have arrived at its present arrangement of female slavery and male arrogance and ingratitude" (65). "Time and Custom," Collier argues, are masked by men as ancient design; history is conjured as a natural order. The fall from an erstwhile equitable and harmonious system into one of discordant toil is evinced by women being prevented from accruing just recompense for their labor:

And after all our Toil and Labour past,  
Six-pence or Eight-pence pays us off at last;  
For all our Pains, no Prospect can we see  
Attend us, but Old Age and Poverty. (198-201)

A woman's displacement from the benefits of her labor is the proof of a rupture in a "happy State," as her loss is positioned within an irreversible degeneration.

Mary Leapor's *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1748) encodes degeneration as the enclosure of pastoral. "Snaith Marsh. A Yorkshire Pastoral" blames the decrement of "our whole town's pride, the poor man's bread" on the division and sale of the commons of Snaith Marsh. The pre-enclosed golden age, where a farmer "tho' no rent paid, his cattle fed," is supplanted by the "harshness of the new order: 'My goodly stock e'er yet they tasted food, / By cross-grain'd hinds were driv'n from their abode...'" <sup>17</sup> Leapor intends to refashion pastoral poetry by

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Landry 65.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Greene. *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 142.

presenting rural figures alienated from their environment, as "On Winter" demonstrates:

Poor daggled *Urs'la* stalks from Cow to Cow,  
 Who to her Sighs return a mournful Low;  
 While their full Udders her broad Hands assail,  
 And her sharp Nose hangs dropping o'er the Pail.  
 With Garments trickling like a shallow Spring,  
 And his wet Locks all twisted in a String,  
 Afflicted *Cymon* waddles through the Mire,  
 And rails at *Win'fred* creeping o'er the Fire.

Say gentle Muses, say, is this a Time,  
 To sport with Poesy and laugh in Rhyme,  
 While the chill'd Blood, that hath forgot to glide,  
 Steals through its Channels in a lazy Tide?  
 And how can *Phoebus*, who the Muse refines,  
 Smooth the dull Numbers when he seldom shines? (27-40)<sup>18</sup>

As *Ursala* and *Cymon* trudge from task to task, *Leapor* kneads her characters into the landscape, making them fixtures of the earth. The milkmaid's nose and clothes "trickling like a shallow Spring," and *Cymon's* miry, twisted hair, perhaps suggesting a tangle of leaves or vines, strikes a stark dissimilarity to the "gentle Muses" that landowning aristocrats would employ to celebrate rustic life. Now is not the "Time," *Leapor* implies, to suppress the crude realities that social injustice has created. Toil has replaced *otium*.

In the last two lines cited above in "On Winter," *Leapor* transposes *Phoebus* from one register to another, from the mythic to the quotidian, from the upper-class god of poetry to a mere sun hidden by daily gloom. Charlotte Smith treats pastoralism in a similar manner in the penultimate sonnet of the introductory

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Greene 126.

group of ten poems in the 1784 editions. Sonnet 9 proclaims a shepherd blessed who adopts a Tityrus-like recumbence, but the sonnet's blessing carries a double edge. As with Leapor's Phoebe, an idyllic stereotype is translated into the here-and-now; the shepherd can rest only because he is uninscribed with adversity, viewing nature with a retinal *tabula rasa*:

Blest is yon shepherd, on the turf reclined,  
 Who on the varied clouds which float above  
 Lies idly gazing—while his vacant mind  
 Pours out some tale antique of rural love! (9.1-4)

"Thought would destroy [his] paradise" as it would in Thomas Gray's "Eton College," which Smith acknowledges as a source for this sonnet. Producing only worn-out ditties that spring from a lack of real experience, his mind remains unimpressed by ever-changing shape and motion. Without pain, the shepherd lies as an unformed man:

He has never felt the pangs that move  
 Th' indignant spirit, when with selfish pride,  
 Friends, on whose faith the trusting heart rely'd  
 Unkindly shun th' imploring eye of woe!  
 The ills they ought to soothe, with taunts deride,  
 And laugh at tears themselves have forced to flow.  
 (9.5-10)

It would be easy to read this as just another installment in the annals of sensibility, but when Smith provides two subsequent lines ("Nor *his* rude bosom those fine feelings melt, / Children of Sentiment and Knowledge born"), she hearkens a degeneration of history. Prior to the intrusions of "pride," betrayal, "woe," and "taunts," "Sentiment and Knowledge" have not yet been "born" into the shepherd's life. It is noteworthy that Smith implies

that self-consciousness is brought into being by external pressures, as opposed to the "vacant mind" of a pastoral figure.

Given the *Elegiac Sonnets*' context as poems situated in the gap between "this toiling scene" (4.14) and the memory of all that Bignor Park entails, I wish to emphasize a broader, historical vision in Smith's writing than perhaps she has been credited with in the past. True, it must not be forgotten that the chief source of the poet's troubles lies in her systematic exclusion from legal and financial recourse, all at the hands of men. Smith's sonnets certainly voice resistance against the invasiveness of what is accurately called patriarchal oppression. "Sorrow's rankling shaft" in Sonnet 8, the "pointed thorn" of the sixth sonnet, and the "thorn [that] fester[s] in the heart" in the first sonnet have been read elsewhere as penetrations of an inner female world, an "inevitabl[e]" "phallic image" of patriarchy.<sup>19</sup> This claim is not necessarily incorrect, but it reduces the potency of Smith's larger vision. When we find "Sorrow's rankling shaft" within a "wound," the more limited interpretation is indeed inviting, but it comes at the cost of an insensitivity to the sphere in which Smith sets these thorns. For instance, sonnet 8 "To Spring" concludes:

Ah! season of delight!—could aught be found  
To sooth awhile the tortur'd bosom's pain,  
Of Sorrow's rankling shaft to cure the wound,  
And bring life's first delusions once again,  
'Twere surely met in thee!—thy prospect fair,

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<sup>19</sup> Deborah Kennedy, "Thorns and Roses: the *Sonnets* of Charlotte Smith." *Women's Writing* 2:1 (1995), 51.

Thy sounds of harmony, thy balmy air,  
Have power to cure all sadness—but despair. (8.8-14)

The shaft's presence prevents the realization of "life's first delusions," that spring's "sounds of harmony" and "balmy air" can remove "despair." Instead, the speaker's responsiveness to pain forces her to admit that the varied objects of spring reveal her alienation from nature. She observes:

Again the wood, and long with-drawing vale,  
In many a tint of tender green are drest,  
Where the young leaves unfolding, scarce conceal  
Beneath their early shade, the half-form'd nest  
Of finch or wood-lark; and the primrose pale,  
And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round,  
Give their sweet spirits to the sighing gale. (8.1-7)

During "life's first delusions" she assumed a correspondence between her nature and the nest, primrose, and cowslip, since for her, the "green" was "tender," the "leaves" were "young," the "cowslip" was "lavish." Now her feelings open a "wound" between those nouns and their modifiers. The woods, leaves, birds, and flowers are vestiges of an irretrievable past, an "irreducible alterity"<sup>20</sup> that testifies to her life's entropic, linear history as opposed to one marked by the healing cycles of nature.

Thorns are not a static metaphor throughout the growth of the *Elegiac Sonnets*. From the first two editions to editions three and four in 1786, Smith's complication of the thorn metaphor discloses a contentious, antipastoral landscape. If the first

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<sup>20</sup> Curran, xxvii.

sonnet's thorn bears a social protest,<sup>21</sup> then that protest is as occluded as is any renitent voice in her first preface where she mentions only the beguiling of "some very melancholy moments." The thorns and shaft that mark a simple discomfort become a thorniness in later sonnets. The third edition's sonnet 27 presents "thorns that lurking lay / To wound the wretched pilgrim (7,8) and in sonnet 36 we see a wanderer in a path of "thorns and roughness." What was a symbol of the tyranny of emotionalism is expanded into an attribute of a menacing environment. It is in these subsequent editions that we can see the language of resistance, a language that builds upon the conceptualization of unending, unproductive toil established in the earlier poems.

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<sup>21</sup> The first sonnet reads:

The partial Muse has from my earliest hours  
 Smiled on the rugged path I'm doom'd to tread,  
 And still with sportive hand has snatch'd wild  
 flowers,  
 To weave fantastic garlands for my head:  
 But far, far happier is the lot of those  
 Who never learn'd her dear delusive art;  
 Which, while it decks the head with many a rose,  
 Reserves the thorn to fester in the heart.  
 For still she bids soft Pity's melting eye  
 Stream o'er the ills she knows not to remove,  
 Points every pang, and deepens every sigh  
 Of mourning Friendship, or unhappy Love.  
 Ah! the, how dear the Muse's favours cost,  
 If those paint sorrow best—who feel it most.

### The Development of Exile in the Sonnets

In 1786 Charlotte Smith added 20 sonnets to her collection,<sup>22</sup> of which nearly a third portray landscapes that become increasingly alienating, barren zones that allow their "wanderers," as she begins to consistently call them, no rest. Sometimes merely melancholy, but oftentimes harsh and threatening, Smith invests these regions with a power that attenuates any peaceful or productive natural order. Her locodescriptive poems conveyed a sense of displacement through protagonists who are disconnected from a reparative natural order. These later sonnets, with their antipastoral texture, envision harsh landscapes that no one could possibly own, where any viewer would be impressed with her sense of estrangement.

Her appropriation of such scenery is remarkable for its refusal to render a fractured self; in fact, the way she employs land to exhibit the exile of her sufferers brings a greater cohesiveness to their identity—not despite, but due to their state of dispossession. This presented a significant challenge

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<sup>22</sup> The third and fourth editions, which sold for three shillings, added the following 20 sonnets: sonnet 10 (To Mrs. G) is inserted between sonnets 9 and 11, the "Imitation" of Bernis and "Origin of Flattery" are moved to the back of the collection, and Bernis' original French text is dropped. Sonnet 12 "Written on the sea shore.—October, 1784" is inserted between 11 "To sleep" and the first Petrarchan adaptation. Smith adds 13 "From Petrarch," sonnets 17-20, and offers an expanded set in Werter's voice, 21-25. The third and fourth editions end at sonnet 36.



to contemporary conceptions of the sublime. Edmund Burke<sup>23</sup> defined the sublime as the ultimate displacement of the self when faced with an insuperable external force. A fear of pain and danger is the most powerful idea possible (74), "rob[bing] the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning," resulting in "astonishment" where:

all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. (88)

Thus the mind is "hurried out of itself," losing all thought of its own identity (92).

Charlotte Smith's sonnet 12, the first poem in the series to introduce a perilous landscape, demonstrates her resistance to a bifurcation of self:

On some rude fragment of the rocky shore,  
Where on the fractured cliff the billows break,  
Musing, my solitary seat I take,  
And listen to the deep and solemn roar.  
O'er the dark waves the winds tempestuous howl;  
The screaming sea-bird quits the troubled sea:  
But the wild gloomy scene has charms for me,  
And suits the mournful temper of my soul. (12.1-8)

No vacant-minded dreamer who seems strangely out of touch with her surroundings, she intentionally places herself in danger as she attains a personal coherence through her musing and absorbing

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the solemnity of her surroundings, finding herself more at home here than the "screaming sea-bird" because "the wild gloomy scene" suits her soul's temper. In the "suiting," Smith makes ferocity part of her fabric, seeming to wrap the outside around her inside, fitting the turbulence of nature onto herself. Rather than being pulled out of herself, she alters a splitting force into one that coalesces.

In chapter two we saw antipastorals that gained their weight by reasserting the wholeness of a pre-industrial age and then delineating the material ramifications of injustice in the enclosed or enslaved community. Since the avenues of restitution are closed to Smith, she reformulates the resistant mode into a psychic antipastoralism. Socially-based perfidies are mapped onto her inner space, with which she contours an imaginary exilic scene. The alienation that creates the "rude fragment of the rocky shore" and fractures the cliff upon which the "billows break" ensues from an outside-in movement—from cultural malfeasance to an effect upon the "mournful temper of [the] soul"—and not from inside-out.

Smith exhibits an external/internal dichotomy not only in the direction of transference but also in terms of physical space, which she structures in an intriguing way. Offering a simile for her alienated condition, she avers:

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<sup>23</sup> *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.)

Already shipwreck'd by the storms of Fate,  
 Like the poor mariner methinks I stand,  
 Cast on a rock; who sees the distant land  
 From whence no succor comes—or comes too late.  
 Faint and more faint are heard his feeble cries,  
 'Till in the rising tide, th' exhausted sufferer dies.  
 (12.9-14)

We might expect a picture of a castaway in utter isolation, but Smith's victim looks across a gulf at the safety of the mainland. If she were ashore, she would not be subject to the relentlessness of time; the tide would be inconsequential. Compared to her ravaged world, the distant land possesses a continuity that she desperately needs. The rupture between herself and society, therefore, exists as a difference in the operation of time. This may explain the poem's full title, "Written on the sea shore.—October, 1784," which is the first in the *Elegiac Sonnets* to list a place and time of composition.<sup>24</sup> With it, some sense of history is invoked. The rising tide, the dating of the subtitle, and the image of severance congeal in an irreversible, antipastoral progression.

The twelfth sonnet is indicative of a disaffectedness that flavors many of the newly added poems in the 1786 editions. The 1784 editions experimented with an imitation of Petrarch's pastoral elegiac style in sonnets 14 through 16, as the sorrows of unrequited love find their reflection in "green leaves [that]

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<sup>24</sup> Fletcher speculates that Sonnet 12 "probably was begun on the Sussex seashore before she left [for France, to bring herself and her children to join her husband Benjamin who was a fleeing his English creditors]. But it must have been completed later when she was far inland, in France" (9).

exclude the summer beam" (15.1), in a "lucid stream" which is heard "across the fretted rock" (15.4), or a "bright stream" "fringed with shrubs and flowers" (16.3), all of which are called as "witnesses of love!" (16.4). Smith breaks this verdant sentimentalism with a jarring injunction in the new sonnet 13:

Oh! Place me where the burning noon  
Forbids the wither'd flower to blow;  
Or place me in the frigid zone,  
On mountains of eternal snow." (13.1-4)

Expositions of a languishing love are very rare in Smith's poetry—in fact, sonnets 13 and 23 (an additional sonnet in Werter's voice) constitute her final tuition to the theme of unfulfilled love. And yet, she infuses the language of dislocation into groups of sonnets that had previously been serenely pastoral. The three original Werter poems (21, 22, and 24) with their conventional sentimental lamentations<sup>25</sup> are interrupted by sonnet 23, "To the North Star," which conceives a wanderer in a storm:

Now nightly wandering mid the tempests drear  
That howl the woods and rocky steeps among,  
I love to see thy sudden light appear  
Thro' the swift clouds—driven by the wind along;  
Or in the turbid water, rude and dark,  
O'er whose wild stream the gust of Winter raves,  
Thy trembling light with pleasure still I mark,  
Gleam in faint radiance on the foaming waves! (23.5-12)

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<sup>25</sup> To illustrate, solitude inhabits a "sequester'd vale," in Sonnet 22, and "wild-woods, and untrodden glades" are a fit place for "soft Pity's sighs" (22.1-8). Werter hopes that Charlotte's tears will fall over his grave "beneath the lime-trees shade" (24.13, 1).

This is the first instance in the *Elegiac Sonnets* of a wandering persona. Smith increasingly uses this figure, setting him or her in a danger that, true to the precedent of sonnet 12, the wanderer embraces.

"Wanderer" becomes Smith's favorite epithet in volume one of the *Sonnets*,<sup>26</sup> followed by "pilgrim." One's status as a wanderer or pilgrim is often brought into relief by a thorny or violent environment, a setting which denies any hope of ownership or belonging. Sonnet 27 separates the speaker from "yon little troop [of children] at play" with a distinction in the operation of time, analogous to the pattern in the twelfth sonnet. The children exist in a "happy age" that has no notion of inevitability, no sense of effects that follow from causes:

While free and sportive they enjoy to-day,  
 "Content and careless of to-morrow's fare!"  
 O happy age! when Hope's unclouded ray  
 Lights their green path, and prompts their simple  
 mirth;  
 Ere yet they feel the thorns that lurking lay  
 To wound the wretched pilgrims of the earth;  
 Making them rue the hour that gave them birth;  
 And threw them on a world so full of pain,  
 Where prosperous folly treads on patient worth,  
 And, to deaf Pride, Misfortune pleads in vain! (27.3-12)

Apparently, the thorns will prod the children out of their seemingly timeless age, but not because of an excessive sensibility (as in the first sonnet), but through abuses of the

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<sup>26</sup> "Wanderer" occurs eight times in Sonnets 23, 32, 35, 36, 45, 55, and 56; "pilgrim" is found in Sonnets 4, 27, 52; "wretched" is found in Sonnets 4, 39.

social hierarchy, the "prosperous folly" and "deaf Pride." Broken social relationships force the "wanderers of the earth" into a condition that appears like an earth-shattering tempest in sonnet 35. "The beating storm," the "bitter winds that howl," the "bursting waves / And the deep thunder" represent the "ills that poor Humanity must bear" (35.2-10). When Smith capitalizes "Humanity" for the first time in the series, she initiates a universalization of what had previously been in her poetry an individualized experience of suffering. Thus, when the subsequent sonnet's first line presents "the lone Wanderer" (which also the first instance of "Wanderer" in the uppercase), she has developed a typological sufferer, one who stands for a class of exiles. These exiles must journey "tho' [their] path thro' thorns and roughness lay" (36.5):

It is inaccurate to say, though, that Smith's Wanderers range exclusively through inhospitable scenery, for as in sonnet 36, pastoral and antipastoral are interwoven:

Should the lone Wanderer fainting on his way,  
Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,  
And tho' his path thro' thorns and roughness lay,  
Pluck the wild rose, or woodbine's gadding flowers,  
Weaving gay wreaths beneath some sheltering tree,  
The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose; (36.1-6)

Seeking a shady rest during the heat of the day is the convention that initiates a dialogue of *otium*. The Wanderer finds relief in the beauty of nearby roses and woodbine, but it is unclear where the "thorns and roughness" lie in relation to flowers and the shelter of the tree; the divided regions of comfort and distress

that we saw in Sonnet 12 are mingled. Such an image was a well-established cultural motif in the mid- to late eighteenth-century, as the genre of picturesque painting testifies. For example, Thomas Gainsborough's "Rest Along the Way,"<sup>27</sup> depicts a cowherd reclining in arboreal shadows aside a dusty path, along which his cows are seen disappearing as they amble on ahead of him. Submerged in the shady depths is another man who encourages the resting worker to rise and follow his herd toward a village seen in the distance. Obtaining rest is tenuous, accomplished by a traveler who must progress linearly through a static, peaceful realm—where the peacefulness is a constant reminder of the Wanderer's dislocation. Joseph Warton's 1753 translation of the first Virgilian eclogue provides the classical example of a pastoral plenty that signifies a grievous loss.<sup>28</sup> After Meliboeus decries the transformation of his pastures into a flinty, lightning-blasted area, Tityrus comforts him:

Yet here, this night, at least, with me reclin'd  
On the green leaves, an humble welcome find;  
Ripe apples, chesnuts soft, my fields afford,  
And cheese in plenty loads my rural board.  
And see! from village-tops the smoak ascend,  
And falling shades from western hills extend. (1.101-106)

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<sup>27</sup> Located in the permanent collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1747). For a discussion of this painting and the politics of the picturesque in Wordsworth, see Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: the Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 76-80.

<sup>28</sup> See Paul Alpers, *The Singer of the Eclogues: A Study of Virgilian Pastoral* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 84-90 for a discussion of Tityrus' exacerbation of Meliboeus' sense of exile in the former's hospitable invitation.

The abundance of his friend's table highlights Meliboeus' own exclusion—exclusion not only from ownership, but from participation in a productive natural order:

Happy old man! then still thy farms restor'd,  
 Enough for thee, shall bless thy frugal board.  
 What tho' rough stones the naked soil o'erspread,  
 Or marshy bulrush rear its watry head,  
 No foreign food thy teeming ewes shall fear,  
 No touch contagious spread its influence here.  
 Happy old man! here mid' the custom'd streams  
 And sacred springs, you'll shun the scorching beams,  
 While from yon willow-fence, thy pastures' bound,  
 The bees that suck their flowery stores around,  
 Shall sweetly mingle, with the whispering boughs,  
 Their lulling murmurs, and invite repose: (1.59-70)

For the dispossessed, another's "repose" acts as a thorn, an ever-present reminder of one's own dispossession. Similarly, in the *Sonnets*, beside the "low murmurs" of the Arun River, fringed by "oak and birch," and "first-born violets of the year" (26.7-10), or near a "willow'd shore" of "banks romantic" (30.5), Smith places a regional poet and playwright who died in extreme poverty.<sup>29</sup>

Wanderers in the *Sonnets*' first volume, therefore, inhabit two worlds, one that references the environs of Smith's childhood (which kindles the personae's feelings of exile) and the other, which is a more psychic antipastoralism. Most of the additional sonnets to the fifth and sixth editions<sup>30</sup> bear this latter aspect,

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Otway, Curran 30.

<sup>30</sup> The fifth edition was printed in pocket size for 10s. 6d. It adds sonnets 37-48, "Ode to Despair" from the novel *Emmeline*, and "Elegy," along with five illustrative engravings. Volume one is



with complaints "[t]o sullen surges and the viewless wind" (39.8) from a "bosom transient," excluded from "tranquil nature." (40.13,17). Typical of the inner, alienating landscape is a geometry of pastoral circularity that disinterestedly moves about her life's unidirectional plane:

As sinks the day-star in the rosy West,  
The silent wave, with rich reflection glows:  
Alas! can tranquil nature give *me* rest,  
Or scenes of beauty soothe me to repose? (40.5-8)

As her character walks across the Downs in sonnet 42 she implicitly juxtaposes her linear existence—an image she has drawn from since the "rugged path" of the first sonnet—with nature's cyclic behavior:

Ah! yet a little—and propitious Spring  
Crown'd with fresh flowers shall wake the woodland  
strain;  
But no gay change revolving seasons bring  
To call forth pleasure from the soul of pain! (42. 8-12)

Nearly all the new sonnets for the sixth edition (49-59) contain a "lone island" in the Hebrides on which Smith's character Celestina is marooned, a "desolate and rude" scene, "steep cliffs" (52.5), or a "dangerous sea" (57.2). From 1784 to 1792 the *Elegiac Sonnets* portray an exile's resistance against a stultifying system.

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complete in 1792 with the sixth edition, adding numbers 49-59 and four other poems at the end of the series. No price is listed on the extant sixth edition that I studied.

### A Brutal Antipastoralism in *The Emigrants*

By 1789 Smith's picture of nature, often manifest in a likeness of her threatened condition to overpowering natural forces, began to give way to a more direct expression of nature's actual brutality. Her most anthologized poem, sonnet 44 "Written in the church-yard at Middleton in Sussex," bears witness to what she sees as an invasion of nature across the boundary separating the two realms of rest and struggle. The sonnet's footnote explains:

The wall, which once surrounded the church-yard, is entirely swept away, many of the graves broken up, and the remains of bodies interred washed into the sea; whence human bones are found among the sand and shingles on the shore.

We could read this ravaging by nature as yet another characterization of social ills as a crashing tempest; the penultimate line compares the turbulent, relentless sea to being doomed to "life's long storm." However, the opening quatrain speaks to a broader, even cosmic force:

Press'd by the Moon, mute arbitress of tides,  
While the loud equinox its power combines,  
The sea no more its swelling surge confines,  
But o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides. (44.1-4)

The fourth sonnet, "To the moon," showed the "fair planet of the night" shedding a "soft calm upon my troubled breast," while here the moon is part of an automatic machine, combining its powers

with "the loud equinox"<sup>31</sup> that crosses the limn (thus, it "sublimely rides") of the "silent sabbath of the grave." When "[t]he wild blast...Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed [and] / Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead," (44.5-7) she observes that "their bones whiten in the frequent wave." The sabbath rest of the dead violated by the confluence of an earthly tempest and the other-worldly exertion of the moon cannot retain the residue of life in the bones; even the marrow's effect is bleached from them. And yet, these roiling bones possess more peace than the astonished speaker who "gaze[s] with envy on their gloomy rest."<sup>32</sup> Sonnet 44 demonstrates external nature crossing over from mere simile to a more real and troubling materiality, a movement which matures in *The Emigrants* in 1793.

In late 1792 French clergy and nobility began fleeing the Reign of Terror, arriving on England's southern coast where some of them were taken by Smith into her home, despite her own

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<sup>31</sup> Smith probably intends "equinox" to denote a violent storm. The *OED* (852) cites an obsolete use of the word by Dryden: "The wind, 'tis true, Was somewhat high, but that was nothing new, Nor more than usual equinoxes blew." If the equinox is storm, that would explain its unusual pairing with "loud."

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that in Wordsworth's own copy of the fifth edition in the Dove Cottage Library, he redacted Smith's last line and supplied, "To envy their insensible unrest." (See Bishop Hunt's "Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith." *Wordsworth Circle* 1 (1970), 85). To me, this shows that Wordsworth, who probably made this amendment in 1791, misunderstood Smith's consistently expressed conception of rest and oblivion that is the reward for enduring a life of strife and unrest.

family's difficulties.<sup>33</sup> Their eviction is adumbrated in *The Emigrants* with Smith's borrowing of perhaps the greatest antipastoral moment in the *Georgics*. Curran translates her Latin rendering of the passage at 1.505-11:

Here right has become wrong and wrong right, so much war spread across the world, so many aspects of evil. The plow is no longer honored; *fields have been emptied of their tillers*; and the curved sickle is beaten into the unbending sword. War erupts on the Euphrates, in Germany: neighboring states break their treaties and bear forth arms. Uncaring Mars savages the whole world. (149, my emphasis)

Fields are emptied of their tillers by a propulsive force external to the healthy, productive space of rural labor. Once again, the direction of a socially oppressive movement is from the outside-in. The land's barrenness is not Jove's doing—no act of God in nature has destroyed the crops—but consonant with the tenor of Sonnet 44, human wrongs have had such a widespread effect, their inertia seeming irrepressible, that they assume the character of a mighty, spiritual force: when swains become soldiers, "Mars savages the whole world."

*The Emigrants* is a poem that explores the nature of exile, in the sense of a manifestation of the character of exiled people, and in the sense of a physical nature estranged from its usual productive, regenerative mode, as it assumes the shape of an antagonist. Richard Greene finds that when labor poetry sets the harsh aspect of the seasons against human efforts, such "physical

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<sup>33</sup> See Fletcher's chapter that discusses *The Emigrants* in *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*, 191.

evil [in nature] is therefore connected with a latent struggle against social evil" (130). Much more so than the *Elegiac Sonnets*, *The Emigrants* is deeply concerned with labor issues, presenting an image of an emptied pasture, a pastoral put on the run. While this poem's understanding of "involuntary exile" has been read elsewhere as an "emotional exile" from the sympathies of the dominant culture,<sup>34</sup> I read "involuntary exile" not for its emotional weight, but for its reference to actual, material displacement from the productivity and purpose given by the land to a worker, and from the benefits to which a laborer is entitled. This poem, therefore, investigates the debilitating effects on a class of people when "Man, misguided Man, / Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy" (1.32, 33). No doubt, Smith intends a pun on the verb "mars," implying that human interference and injustice behave like the chaotic god of war. Within this play on words is precisely the larger process that Smith presents: the "fair work" (not just tangible nature, but also its divinely-instituted structure) has been dismembered. That disruptive action has two aspects, the social (it "makes [Man] himself the evil he deplores" (1.34)) and the natural, in

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<sup>34</sup> Kay K. Cook ("The Aesthetics of Loss: Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* and *Beachy Head*," *Approaches to Teaching British Women Poets of the Romantic Period*, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt [New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1997], 97) argues that the literature of sympathy is an important presage of Romanticism. She sees Wordsworth, Wollstonecraft, and Smith all writing in 1792 and 1793 on their "emotional exile" as they issue a voice from a position outside the dominant culture's circle of

which external nature is spoiled. Therefore, in reading *The Emigrants* I first will point to moments of social evil (which she identifies as "exile"), and then demonstrate how exile transforms nature into a site of dispossession.

The French emigrants are not introduced until 94 lines into the poem, after which Smith has presented "legal crimes" that result from "proud oppression" (1.36). Taking aim at the English legal and socioeconomic structure, she contends that the system is paradoxical (hence "legal crimes") by forcing "wretch[es]" to starve while paying the cost of legal representation (1.41). The necessity to care for her children against organized injustice likens her to "the fabled Danaids—or the wretch, / Who ceaseless, up the steep acclivity, / Was doom'd to heave the still rebounding rock" (1.68-70). When we note the likely source for these lines, her expansive conception of victimhood becomes clearer. Mary Collier replies to Stephen Duck in *The Woman's Labour*:

While you to *Sisyphus* yourselves compare,  
With *Danaus' Daughters* we may claim a Share;  
For while he labours hard against the Hill,  
Bottomless Tubs of Water they must fill. (239-42).

Donna Landry suggests that by citing the fifty daughters of Danaus who eternally draw water in a sieve, Collier elevates women's work above men's, since washtub filling bears a social weight in laboring for others, rather than pursuing an

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concerns, indicating that they are cut off from the sympathies of the nation.

individual, Sisyphean task (64). Broadening the effect of Collier's argument, Smith converts her efforts for her children into an archetype:

Onward I labour; as the baffled wave,  
Which yon rough beach repulses, that returns  
With the next breath of wind, to fail again. (71-73)

These lines recall the "troubled waves" that strive to reach shore in the poem's opening scene, mapping the poet's suffering onto a vast, futile enterprise.

Curiously, she claims that her striving would not be remedied by attaining the class-status and comfort of land ownership. She exhorts herself to:

...cease and learn,  
That not the Cot sequest'd, where the briar  
And wood-bine wild, embrace the mossy thatch...  
Or more substantial farm, well fenced and warm,  
Where the full barn, and cattle fodder'd round  
Speak rustic plenty; nor the statelier dome...[which]  
Declare[s] manorial residence; not these  
Or any of the buildings, new and trim  
With windows circling towards the restless Sea,  
Which ranged in rows, now terminate my walk,  
Can shut out for an hour the spectre Care,  
That from the dawn of reason, follows still  
Unhappy Mortals, 'till the friendly grave  
(Our sole secure asylum) "ends the chace." (1.75-80,  
86-93)

Smith's eye moves from low to high on the socioeconomic ladder, from the pastoral abode, to a healthy vision of georgic productivity, followed by a country gentleman's estate, and concluding at the Prince of Wales' Royal Pavilion at Brighton.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Curran, 138.

Even the possession of these comfortable lifestyles would not satisfy the speaker since her idea of exile cannot be eliminated by ownership alone. All mortals' lives, she contends, will be pursued by Care until the grave "ends the chace." Although Smith glosses that she cannot remember the source of the quoted phrase, discovering its most likely source can better explain the fundamental burden of the poem. "Ends the chace" is found in only one place in the British literary canon,<sup>36</sup> in Samuel Pratt's "Cards: Pro and Con" published in 1785. Smith states her "confused notion, that this expression, with nearly the same application, is to be found in Young," but it is not unlikely that she would have read Samuel Pratt, who was quite popular at the time and published his short poem after Smith had returned from France. In Pratt, the gallows ends the chase of a gambler who has cheated at cards, a man who earned a living out of other men's pocketbooks. Although Smith seems to have had no intent to tie her theme to Pratt's poem, the phrase may have occurred to her for its context of an indictment of winning unearned money. The "Care" that pursues unhappy mortals personifies a system that seizes wealth and labor from others, as is clearly the case in her own life and all of the personae in *The Emigrants*. The established system of deprivation is Smith's target; *The Emigrants* is not a simple wish for reinstatement.

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<sup>36</sup> According to a search of Chadwyck-Healey's database of the British canon.



To illustrate this broader goal, she forms a case study by studying a group of men who also lived parasitically—the French clergy. Before her on the beach, she scrutinizes the priests who pass by, imagining their past lives and present thoughts. As a participant in an organization that thrived off of others' toil, the first priest "consum'd [a] life inactive," living on "eleemosynary bread" (the alms of his parishioners),<sup>37</sup> thinking that "to renounce God's works, would please that God" (1.119). Smith singles out the inherent contradiction of being supported by the material labors of the community while at the same moment disparaging the world for its materiality. A second cleric "of more haughty port,...in mute despair / [whose] high indignant thoughts go back to France" (1.127) trudges by as he dwells "on all he lost—the Gothic dome, / That vied with splendid palaces; the beds of silk and down, the silver chalices, / Vestments with gold enwrought for blazing altars" (1.128-31). Given the priests' participation in such systematic inequality, Smith could have held them in contempt; hierarchies built on an aggrandizement of others' wealth, she argues, whether in France or England—her footnote implies an implication of the Anglican church, as well<sup>38</sup>—are the chief cause of displacement. Surprisingly, she sympathizes: "I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known / Involuntary exile" (1.155-56). Her notion of "involuntary exile" clearly exceeds the simple designations of

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<sup>37</sup> Curran, 139.

gender and class, for now that the clergymen are refugees, they are as equally removed from hope as she is. Together they are like:

The simple shepherd in a rustic scene,  
And, 'mid the vine-clad hills of Languedoc,  
Taught to the bare-foot peasant, whose hard hands  
Produc'd the nectar he could seldom taste,  
Submission to the Lord for whom he toil'd; (1.170-74)

Noting that her Languedoc shepherd is based on a poem from Joseph Warton that calls a laborer alienated from his work a "slave" (141), Smith contrives an essential antipastoral argument: exile arises from an authoritative disruption of the convivial relationship of labor to land.

*The Emigrants* takes aim not at despots, but at the "Despotism" (1.274) of "pamper'd Parasites" (1.330) who are the "venal, worthless hirelings of a Court" (1.329), similar to Crabbe's attack on tyranny. In an argument closely related to the anti-slavery rhetoric studied in chapter two, she decries the drawing of workers into an economy in which they forge their own fetters (1.331), even while "luxury wreathes with silk the iron bonds, / And hides the ugly rivets with her flowers" (1.278-79). Whether oppression comes in the form of capitalism that alienates the worker from her work, or in the physical displacement of people from their homeland (no matter what their station in the hierarchy), Smith compiles a vision of the dangers of exile, which causes "fair Order [to] sink / Her decent head, and lawless

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<sup>38</sup> Curran, 140.

Anarchy / [to] O'erturn celestial Freedom's radiant throne"  
(1.340-42).

After book one of *The Emigrants* defined the vast scope of involuntary exile, the second book explores how the inversion of right and wrong, to which the epilogue from the *Georgics* speaks, reshapes the actual site of dispossession. The *Elegiac Sonnets'* simile of oppression in landscape gained its power by leaving the physical beauties—the corporeal coherence—of the South Downs untouched; knowing that primroses and hare-bells still bloomed made the imaginative tempests of the Wanderer's mind more poignant. On the British coast, littered by emigrants, nature itself struggles. "The early leaves...fear capricious winds," she notes, and "timid flowers / Give, half reluctantly, their warmer hues...[to the] pale stars" of the primrose (2.24-27). The groves are leafless and provide no shelter for its native inmates (2.30). In light of nature's powerlessness she asks:

What is the promise of the infant year,  
The lively verdure, or the bursting blooms,  
To those, who shrink from horrors such as War  
Spreads o'er the affrighted world? (2.43-46)

These lines form the turning point from a nature whose representation could be explained away as the perspective of the sorrowful speaker, to one that is materially affected by human intervention. In revolutionary France, she claims:

the trumpet's voice  
Drowns the soft warbling of the woodland choir;  
And violets, lurking in their turfy beds  
Beneath the flow'ring thorn, are stain'd with blood.  
There fall, at once, the spoiler and the spoil'd;

While War, wide-ravaging, annihilates  
 The hope of cultivation; gives to Fiends,  
 The meagre, ghastly Fiends of Want and Woe,  
 The blasted land— (2.68-76)

The spectacle of anarchy does more than block the beauty of nature—it eviscerates it; the lilies that are trampled in dust and "blood-bespotted" (2.105) are presented as more than just poetic convention, the despotism identified in the first book has assumed the role of Mars. "War" at line 73 retains both its mythic symbolism and its terrifying reality, disjoining the productive structure found in the world of the georgic. As in Virgil, when rapacity sublimely rides over the boundary between farm and battlefield, "the hope of cultivation" is annihilated.

She has such a partition between destructive and productive spaces in mind. Where there is peace:

...our vallies, cloath'd with springing corn,  
 No hostile hoof shall trample, nor fierce flames  
 Wither the wood's young verdure, ere it form  
 Gradual the laughing May's luxuriant shade;  
 For, by the rude sea guarded, we are safe,  
 And feel not evils such as with deep sighs  
 The Emigrants deplore, as they recal  
 The Summer past, when Nature seem'd to lose  
 Her course in wild distemperature, and aid,  
 With seasons all revers'd, destructive War. (2.206-15)

Virgil, in the conclusion of the *Georgics*,<sup>39</sup> speaks of building Italy by keeping the thunder of Caesar's army at a distance, whereas *The Emigrants* marks the result of war's ferocity rolling

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<sup>39</sup> From the Warton translation:

Thus, have I sung the labours of the swain,  
 Of trees, of flocks, of cattle and of grain;  
 While mighty Caesar to Euphrates bears

across land once occupied by the exiles. The seasons' reversal amplifies the destruction of battle. The phrase "With season all revers'd" inverts the scheme of earlier eighteenth-century georgic poems, with their claim of a progression from an age of savagery. An industry of oppression has degenerated history; what was once fruitful land is now "desolated countries, where the ground, / Stripp'd of its unripe produce, was thick strewn / With various Death—" (2.217-19). As the emigrants fled from their homes through the countryside en route to the French coast, rain flooded the terrain:

Deluged, as with an inland sea, the vales;  
Where, thro' the sullen evening's lurid gloom,  
Rising, like columns of volcanic fire,  
The flames of burning villages illum'd  
The waste of water; and the wind, that howl'd  
Along its troubled surface, brought the groans  
Of plunder'd peasants, and the frantic shrieks  
Of mothers for their children; (2.223-30)

War has made earth a hell, down to the lakes of fire.

The peroration of the poem demonstrates the limit to which antipastoralism may perform as a resistant georgic mode: the Virgilian georgic imperative of "improvement" through good work cannot be fulfilled in a text that faithfully treats "involuntary exiles." In these circumstances, swords cannot be made into ploughshares. Smith remembers peaceful moments when she would wade into the Arun River and procure "[t]he willow herb of glowing purple spikes, / Or flags, whose sword-like leaves

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His conquering arms, the thunder of his wars; (4.667-70)

conceal'd the tide" (2.340-41). Then, using plants that resemble weapons, she could weave wreaths like ones that shepherd girls wove to deck the "turfy shrine" as they marked the May's arrival. Such pastoral play today, however, is destroyed by awakening each morning to "never-ending toil, / To terror and to tears!" (2.350-51). The only hope the poet provides is in the concluding prayer offered to the "Power Omnipotent," asking him to "teach the hard hearts/ Of rulers" that a system of inequality leads to the destruction of the field (2.430). Aside from divine intervention, there will be no improvement.

Smith's call to "fix / The reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace" (2.444) leaves a bleak antipastoral vision in all its force, with no resolution given for the abject suffering she dramatizes. A woman and her infant, forced by a military attack into the wilderness (2.254-91), cannot escape the "driving tempest" and "deep sullen thunder" of the cannon and thunderstorm that together shake the earth. Rendering possibly the height of poetic pathos in all her work, Smith vivifies the brutality of displacement:

True to maternal tenderness, she tries  
 To save the unconscious infant from the storm  
 In which she perishes; and to protect  
 This last dear object of her ruin'd hopes  
 From prowling monsters, that from other hills,  
 More inaccessible, and wilder wastes,  
 Lur'd by the scent of slaughter, follow fierce  
 Contending hosts, and to polluted fields  
 Add dire increase of horrors—But alas!  
 The Mother and the Infant perish both!— (2.282-91)

Separated from the socioeconomic system of entitlement and from the material benefits that capitalism unevenly distributes, Charlotte Smith's exiles can find no relief, not even in forgetfulness. "Can you a kind Lethean cup bestow," she asks the Arun in the fifth poem of the *Elegiac Sonnets*, "To drink a long oblivion to my care? / Ah no!...There's no oblivion—but in death alone!" William Wordsworth adopted a similar perspective in his earliest poetry, and even enlisted the image of a destitute female exile who perishes in a hostile environment with her child. However, it is in the depiction of female exiles that Wordsworth transforms the psychic form of antipastoral we found in Charlotte Smith—in which she brooks no remediation—into a dematerialized amelioration of suffering. Chapter four will demonstrate how Wordsworth altered every element of antipastoralism as he attempted a restoration of the bond between human labor and the land.

The Transfiguration of Labor in the  
New Eden

First I will bring back to you, Mantua, the  
palms of Idumaea, and on the green plain  
will set up a temple in marble beside the  
water, where great Mincius wanders in lazy  
windings and fringes his banks with slender  
reeds.

—*Georgics* 3.10-15

...and the two Works [*The Prelude* and *The  
Recluse*] have the same kind of relation to  
each other, if he may so express himself,  
as the ante-chapel has to the body of a  
gothic church.

—Preface to *The Excursion*

The Muse takes care of you. You live by writing  
Your poems on a farm and call that farming.

—Robert Frost

My introductory chapter claimed that recovering a georgic  
mode of writing in the late eighteenth-century reveals an  
informing spirit of early Romanticism, a spirit that I have  
argued is generally resistant and specifically antipastoral. For  
the last 120 years or so since Arnold's essay on William  
Wordsworth, notions of early Romanticism<sup>1</sup> have been inseparable

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<sup>1</sup>Following Thomas Woodman's introduction to *Early Romantics:  
Perspectives in British Poetry from Pope to Wordsworth* (New York:  
Macmillan, 1998), I use the term "early Romanticism" in a broad  
sense that takes in writing roughly from Thomas Gray to  
Wordsworth in 1807. For a more formal discussion of  
periodization, see James K. Chandler's *England in 1819 : the  
Politics Of Literary Culture and the Case Of Romantic Historicism*  
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Marlon Ross  
presents a useful theoretical analysis of Romantic periodization  
in "Breaking the Period: Romanticism, Historical Representation,



from the conceptual play of displacement, labor, and alienation in Wordsworth's poetry. A parade of figures comes to mind—the Old Cumberland Beggar, the Pedlar, Martha Ray, the Female Vagrant, Michael, and especially the poet-speaker himself in *The Prelude*—which testifies to the centrality of representations of dispossession in the Wordsworth canon. Indeed, Wordsworth's treatment of loss has been read by some New Historicists as the defining feature of Romantic poetry,<sup>2</sup> but the characterization of that loss has only recently been recognized by others for its debt to protocols of georgic discourse, and even those recognitions—with the exception of a scattering of observations<sup>3</sup>—are limited to two poems, "Michael" in 1800 and *The Excursion* in 1814.<sup>4</sup> Bruce E. Graver, for example, describes Michael's failure as a breakdown of the intimate relationship between a laborer and his land, but thus far the georgic aspect

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and the Prospect of Genre" *ANQ-A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles Notes & Reviews*. 6:2-3 (Apr-July 1993), 121-31.

<sup>2</sup> See the introductions to both *The Romantic Ideology* (Jerome J. McGann [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983]) and Marjorie Levinson's *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Hartman (in *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964], 93) mentions that *An Evening Walk*'s plan is "ultimately based on Virgil's *Georgics*, which proved country matters could be the substance of a sustained poetry,..." but then does not pursue a generic inquiry any further. The georgic ethic found in Wordsworth by Annabel Patterson (*Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], 273-281) is a promotion of "conservative ideology based on 'georgic' values of hard work," which Patterson calls a "hard pastoral."

<sup>4</sup> See Bruce E. Graver's "Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral: Otium and Labor in "Michael" in *European Romantic Review*, 1:2 (Winter 1991), 119-34) on "Michael" and Kevis Bea Goodman ("Passionate

in Wordsworth's work has remained magisterially dissociated with the allegedly inferior writers who immediately preceded him. The "georgic institutionalism that was pervasive just before the Romantic era" (Heinzelman 184) had been left empty of concrete examples, and into that gap I have offered anti-slavery writing and Charlotte Smith's poetry as differently functioning operatives within antipastoralism—a resistant georgic mode.

Although Kurt Heinzelman asserted that an alternate, oppositional georgic became an "impermeable, silent base" for Romanticism,<sup>5</sup> antipastoralism (the strongest candidate for this resistant mode of writing) is not a foundation on which Wordsworth builds, but rather a pivot point from which he turns, transforming the social critique of the antipastoral into an exploration of the mind's relationship to nature's "silent overgrowings." If we read the works I discussed in chapters two and three as a "base," the writing can quickly fade into "mere" protest poetry or simplistic sentiment compared to Wordsworth's powerful introspection. On the other hand, if the movement from external to internal is not equated with a transition from surface to depth, and is instead refocused upon various authors' manipulations of essential bucolic terms such as land, labor, and exile, then perhaps a more accurate literary history may be reconstructed. By attending to these terms in and around two Wordsworth poems, we will see how Wordsworth brings the story of

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*Work": Toward a Georgics of the Feelings.* Dissertation. Yale University, 1994) on *The Excursion*.

antipastoralism as a resistant georgic mode to an end. Since the incipience of Romanticism as a program—or yes, even as an ideology—has been indivisible from Wordsworth's *annus mirabilis* of 1797-98, I will apply some pressure to that moment and the few years that follow it, suggesting that the apparent sudden bloom of (what has been called) Wordsworth's Romantic ideology is more precisely understood as an enclosure of one kind of georgic writing over another.

Instead of offering yet another reason for the remarkable change in Wordsworth's writing after 1797,<sup>6</sup> this chapter maintains that his poetic engine is fueled by a complexity of georgic conceptualizations. To this end, I will demonstrate antipastoralist strategies in his poetry from 1793-95 as he attributes dispossession to war and economic oppression, whereas in *The Ruined Cottage* (1797, revised in 1799), he psychologizes the etiology of displacement, supplanting social pressures with personal infirmities of the human will and mind as the reason for calamity. Accompanying this shift from an external to an internal cause is the rejection of the antipastoral's loss of *otium*, which is replaced by a description of a loss of productive

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<sup>5</sup> Heinzelman, 184.

<sup>6</sup> Most critics, of course, attribute this to Coleridge's influence during the heyday of their collaboration at Alfoxen (1797-98), during which the seed of *The Recluse* was planted. Other views include James Chandler in *Wordsworth's Second Nature* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1984) where the poet's decidedly less radical positions after 1796 signify his adoption of a Burkean educational plan. Harriet Jump ("That Other Eye": Wordsworth's 1794 Revisions of *An Evening Walk*." Wordsworth

labor; the idyll is exchanged for what has recently been called the georgic pastoral.<sup>7</sup> This movement, from one mode of writing to another, is integral to Wordsworth's program of nation-building, where national improvement through an "advancement of learning"<sup>8</sup> occurs one mind at a time. Consequentially, the curse of labor and the hierarchical aspects of its origination (as evidenced in the racial and gender distinctions studied in the previous two chapters) are overwritten by an idealization of labor. The material results of suffering from injustice dwindle into the benevolence of an ameliorative, natural order. Through an educational plan that he likens to a work of the passions and the mind, Wordsworth offers an idea of a poetic containment of rural labor (which he unashamedly calls "enclosure" in *Home at Grasmere*) as a conceptual substitute for the actual practice of land enclosure. Only in such a fabricated elysian retreat can he erect the temple that would be (or would have been) *The Recluse*. I will therefore present his notion of nation-building as a poetic program that involves: 1) transforming the pastoral into the georgic pastoral, 2) internalizing the site of rupture, and 3) redefining every term inherent in antipastoralism, as he reformulates suffering into a requisite for restoration. The primary texts will be *The Ruined Cottage* (1797-99) and *Home at*

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*Circle* 17:3 [1986], 156-163) finds Mark Akenside's influence in the 1794 revision of the 1793 *An Evening Walk*.

<sup>7</sup> In Graver's "Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral."

<sup>8</sup> The phrase "advancement of learning" comes from Francis Bacon, whose *Advancement of Learning* will be discussed later.

*Grasmere* (1800-06).<sup>9</sup> *An Evening Walk* (1793), *Salisbury Plain* (1795), "Michael," and the 1805 *Prelude*<sup>10</sup> will facilitate the arguments made from the two primary works.

The opening scene in *The Ruined Cottage* will initiate an examination of Wordsworth's pastoral revision. The poem begins by invoking a stock motif of the eclogic form, depicting the narrator's need to escape the heat of the midday sun as he walks through the countryside. How pleasant it would be, the speaker muses, to be a dreaming man, reclining in the "dewy shade" of "some huge oak," taking "sidelong" glances at a landscape "made more soft and more distant." The prospect of *otium* is interrupted, however, when the traveler shoves aside the hazy panorama of his imagination with the details of his sweaty, muddy travel through the hills. Annabel Patterson in *Pastoral and Ideology* sees this abrupt shift as owing to Wordsworth's intent to redeem the act of pastoral meditation "from [an] association with [the] empty leisure or unfeeling happiness" of Tityrus in

<sup>9</sup> For references to *The Ruined Cottage* I refer to line numbers in MS B from *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar* by William Wordsworth, ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), with the exception of the concluding narrative frame, which I take from MS D. I will use MS B from *Home at Grasmere* by William Wordsworth, ed. Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> I will use the 1793 edition of *An Evening Walk* by William Wordsworth, ed. James Averill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); *The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) for references to *The Salisbury Plain* and "The Female Vagrant." For "Michael," I will refer to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. London: Routledge, 1990). Lines from *The Prelude* are from William Wordsworth: *The Prelude*

the first *Eclogue*, from whom she says that the dreaming man cannot be dissociated (277). Wordsworth is certainly challenging the conventional eighteenth-century notions of Virgilian pastoral, but he is doing so to make work, not leisure, as the proper subject of pastoral meditation. In fact, this scene derives more from his reading of a section in the *Georgics*, not the *Eclogues*. Following his alterations to this passage, we can see Wordsworth initially converting Virgil's work site at first into a pastoral space in his revisions from 1788-93, and then rewriting it in 1797 as a place where labor is celebrated.<sup>11</sup>

In 1788 Wordsworth adapted parts of the *Georgics* into English couplets, and he drew from these translations throughout his career.<sup>12</sup> The source of the initial setting in *The Ruined Cottage* comes from *Georgics* 3.324-38 where Virgil's shepherd leads his flock into fresh fields in the morning and out of the noon heat to find shady relief. Graver has shown that, taking "one of Virgil's most idealized descriptions of georgic labor," Wordsworth idealizes it even further, eliminating the details of animal care.<sup>13</sup> Later that year Wordsworth incorporated his translation fragment into the first drafts of *An Evening Walk*,

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1799, 1805, 1850, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, Stephen Gill (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth appropriated this opening scene in four related poems from 1793-1814. *An Evening Walk*, *The Ruined Cottage*, "The Pedlar" (1803), and *The Excursion's* Book I (1814) were all commenced by it.

<sup>12</sup> For an investigation of these translations, including this particular scene, see Bruce E. Graver in "Wordsworth's Georgic Beginnings" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33:2 (Summer 1991), 137-59.

discarding any remnants from Virgil of the speaker's personal involvement with strenuous activity. The narrator in *An Evening Walk* is no longer a shepherd, but a purveyor who sees a herd in the distance only as an artistic, pastoral form, just a shape on the land where the flock arranges itself into elongations that extend into a lake as the water cools the sheep from the midday heat:

Gazing the tempting shades to them deny'd  
When stood the shorten'd herds amid' the tide,  
Where, from the barren wall's unshelter'd end,  
Long rails into the shallow lake extend. (57-60)

*An Evening Walk* sets the static image of the herd on the distant pasture at the time of day "When school-boys stretch'd their length upon the green," (61). With the *Georgics'* arena of labor having become a tableau of repose, Wordsworth does not juxtapose the boys' leisure with the narrator as he does when he relocates this passage to *The Ruined Cottage*; there, the school boys are dislodged by the dreaming man, a foil for *The Ruined Cottage's* narrator. *The Ruined Cottage* contraposes the former's *otium* with the latter's labor. Publishing a similar comparison in 1792, Charlotte Smith's fifty-fourth sonnet, "The Sleeping Woodman," portrays its speaker seeking a respite in the forest shade from her wearying depression, where she envies the "sweet forgetfulness of human care" that she attributes to a reclining "Woodman" who "Has sunk to calm tho' momentary rest" (54.8). Wordsworth's narrator, by contrast, favors his own toil over the

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<sup>13</sup> Graver, "Wordsworth's Georgic Beginnings," 144.

recumbence of a pastoral figure, allowing the poet to establish a tone for a narrative of work. That is, good work is about to be narrated and the narration will itself be represented as a (frame)work.

The speaker journeys on and chances upon the remains of Margaret's home where he greets Armytage, the old pedlar. Of the 375 lines of the pedlar's story, only 13 lines (172-184) contain any action, and these detail Robert and Margaret's steady industry. All that follows is a rendering of Margaret's and the cottage's decline, and the pedlar's subsequent lesson on the ways of nature. Robert's character in the 13 lines is properly Virgilian, being the first to begin his tasks and the last to finish, rising before the sun, "busy at his loom," and plying "his busy spade" in the garden until evening fades into night. He, Margaret, and their "two pretty babes" lived in "peace and comfort," a picture of healthy employment.

The cottagers' happiness, so closely modeled after the *Georgics'* *fortunatos nimium*, is an alternative to the contemporaneous bucolic ideal. Throughout the eighteenth-century, the improvement of agrarian methods were not touted simply as a benefit to farmers, but were seen as a means of increasing national productivity. If an era of joyous, self-actualized labor was acknowledged, it was usually located either in the mythic past or the apocryphal future. In the 1788 translation fragments, we can see Wordsworth working against this trend, using the Virgilian text to ennoble the rural labor of his



present day. One of his *Georgics* translations reveals him practicing a glorification of the fortunate husbandman. He turns to *Georgics* 2.458-60:

O farmers, happy beyond measure, could they but know  
their blessings! For them, far from the clash of  
arms, most righteous Earth, unbidden, pours forth from  
her soil an easy sustenance.<sup>14</sup>

Wordsworth assigns the farmers' personal virtue to an intimacy with external nature:

To them the arts of falsehood are unknown  
And nature's various wealth is all their own  
[ ]  
And living lakes and caves of cool recess  
All nature smiles  
[ ]  
They find a Tempe cool in every vale  
At languid noon the far off Heifer lows  
While calm in secret they repose... (616)<sup>15</sup>

Virgil's ideal laborer is blessed both with children who "hang upon his kisses," and with a field where "cows droop milk-laden utters" and "the fat kids wrestle" (2.523-26). "Such was the life golden Saturn lived on earth," Virgil states, "while yet none had heard the clarion blare, none the sword blades ring, as they were laid on the stubborn anvil" (2. 538-40). Robert and Margaret's joyous days of vigorous work are a recreation of what

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<sup>14</sup> From the 1999 Loeb edition (*Georgics*. tr. H. Rushton. rev. G. P. Goold. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999]), Fairclough translates:

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,  
agricolas! quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,  
fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus.

Subsequent English translations are taken from the Fairclough.

<sup>15</sup> *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797 by William Wordsworth*, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

the British bucolic tradition had forgotten—that the Virgilian age of innocence could be defined by labor and productivity.

Such a mode of writing is called the "georgic pastoral" by Graver in a study of "Michael" which demonstrates how closely Michael is sculpted from Virgil's hard-working shepherd.<sup>16</sup> Just as the "Virgilian farmer hammers out his blunted ploughshare when it rains (*Georgics* 1.259-62), or splits the ends of his torches before a winter fire (1.291-92)" so Michael and his son Luke:

At night by their Cumbrian fireside...repair  
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,  
Or some other implement of house or field. (104-9,  
Graver 121)

Even the "perfect shepherd's staff" crafted by Michael for his son is an adaptation of Virgil's description of plough-making (*Georgics* 1.169-75).

This is not to say that the georgic pastoral is simply an assertion of a golden age of labor, for Wordsworth's stories inevitably deal with the loss of the good, hard life, as testified by Margaret's dilapidated cottage and Michael's unfinished sheepfold. An iconography of decay could indicate a debt to antipastoral conventions, but in Goldsmith, Crabbe, Charlotte Smith, and others the protagonists are separated from an age of ease rather than one of strenuous labor. Wordsworth's break from this tradition can be found at a specific moment, which if located, will help illuminate the reason for his shift from pastoral to georgic pastoral.

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<sup>16</sup> Graver, "Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral."

Margaret's closest literary ancestor is the female vagrant of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, both being mothers who have been deserted by husbands lured into war, and both of whom suffer the same effects at the loss of their land and children. Yet their lifestyles before their difficulties are markedly different. The woman on the *Salisbury Plain* lived in a cottage with her father, tended "a little flock," and received "what the finny flood supplied." Two stanzas in *Salisbury Plain* stress a pastoral condition of ownership:

my seat beneath the thorn,  
My garden stored with peas and mint and thyme..  
  
My hen's rich nest..  
  
My snowy kerchiefs on the hawthorn spread.  
(27-28)

Independent proprietorship provides the ground for pastoral communal expression in the poem, manifest in the "seasonal merriment and song," the village dances and ballads, and the ringing of the church bell. In *Salisbury Plain*, as in Auburn or Crabbe's village, these halcyon days based on unenclosed ownership are brought to an end by an abstract personification of "Oppression." True to antipastoralist form, the woman and her father are blameless victims whose property is seized:

At last by cruel chance and wilful wrong  
My father's substance fell into decay.  
Oppression trampled on his tresses grey:  
His little range of water was denied;  
Even to the bed where his old body lay  
His all was seized; and weeping side by side  
Turned out on the cold winds, alone we wandered wide.  
(29.3-9)

After composing most of *The Ruined Cottage* in 1797, Wordsworth revised the woman's story in *Salisbury Plain*, printing it as "The Female Vagrant" in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.<sup>17</sup> The new poem complicates the reasons for the woman's privation, opening up the possibility of psychological distress. As a result, what was a generalized "Oppression" in the 1795 *Salisbury Plain* becomes embodied in "The Female Vagrant" as a nearby lord who demands that the father sell his land and confiscates that land when the father refuses. Rather than issuing a straight-forward indictment of social injustice, the woman's reaction to her family's dispossession affords "an analysis of the values and attachments of one who is being uprooted" (Rieder 339). In the 1795 version, war that wreaks havoc on her second household is described more broadly, on a social scale, not just a personal one:

For War the nation to the field defied.  
The loom stood still;...

How changed at once! for Labor's chearful hum  
Silence and Fear, and Misery's weeping train.  
(33-34)

In "The Female Vagrant" her catastrophe is part of "a chain of events originating in national politics. She indicates her hopelessness and the sorrow of seeing the implements of labor in

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<sup>17</sup> *Salisbury Plain* was finished in 1795; "The Female Vagrant" is a modified version of the woman's tale in *Salisbury Plain* and published in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.

her home lay idle," moving the concern from social wrongs to a crisis of an individual's frame of mind.<sup>18</sup>

Accompanying this gradual change in focus is the deletion of a clear call to violent rebellion. *Salisbury Plain* concludes with bold cry:

Heroes of Truth pursue your march, uprear  
Th' Oppressor's dungeon from its deepest base;  
High o'er the towers of Pride undaunted rear  
Resistless in your might the herculean mace  
Of Reason; let foul Error's monster race  
Dragged from their dens start at the light with  
    pain  
And die; (61)

When *Salisbury Plain* becomes "The Female Vagrant," hot rhetoric fizzles into an implicit plea for sympathy. "What could I do, unaided and unblest?" the woman asks the unnamed auditor in the 1798 text. She elaborates:

Ill was I then for toil or service fit:  
With tears whose course no effort could confine,  
By high-way side forgetful would I sit  
Whole hours, my idle arms in moping sorrow knit.  
(249-52)

The 1798 female vagrant falls into a state of unproductivity, a condition that is notably lacking in *Salisbury Plain*. Unable to perform any useful function in her community, the story in "The Female Vagrant" simply stops as she turns away weeping.

When we read Margaret against *Salisbury Plain's* female vagrant, we can see the causal site of the disruption in the protagonist's way of life migrating from the external to the

<sup>18</sup> John Rieder in "Civic Virtue and Social Class at the Scene of Execution: Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* Poems" *Studies in*

internal. Instead of querying which social evils thwart an ability to own and produce, Wordsworth's georgic pastoral mode asks "What is it in the individual that removes the ability to work?" After the 13 lines that picture the couple's labor, the pedlar recounts a variety of hardships that beset them: "Two blighting seasons when the fields were left with half a tillage" combine with "A worse affliction in the plague of war" (188). The widespread poverty that ensues is described in psychological terms:

...many rich  
Sunk down as in [a] dream among the poor,  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. (194-96)

The pedlar portrays an incoherence of consciousness—dwelling and dweller are alienated from each other. Alienation emerges not through the power of a wealthy neighbor nor through enclosure legislation, but in Robert's weakness to apply his mind to necessary tasks. The pedlar remembers how Robert stood...

And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them, or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks,  
Then idly sought about through every nook  
Of house or garden any casual task  
Of use or ornament, and with a strange,  
Amusing but uneasy novelty  
He blended where he might the various tasks  
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring. (215-23)

His enlistment in the war is an inevitable extension of his self-imposed exile. The female beggar in *An Evening Walk*, a prototype of the female vagrant in *Salisbury Plain*, can only blame her

distress upon her husband's death "on Bunker's charnell hill afar" in the American war (254), but Robert's desertion of Margaret and the children for the battlefield is just the final act of his irrationality.

A brief look at the crucial moment of decision in "Michael" will amplify this point. Neither war nor ruthless landowners afflict Michael and his wife Isabel; their land and their noble life of toil are lost ultimately due to their flawed judgment.<sup>19</sup> When a letter apprises Michael of the need to raise funds to pay a debt to which he is bound by surety, he complains:

I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
                                   ...yet if these fields of ours  
 Should pass into a Stranger's hand, I think  
 That I could not lie quiet in my grave. (238-42)

He admits to his wife that "There are ten thousand to whom loss like this / Had been no sorrow," (248-49) but nevertheless he is determined that no portion of his patrimonial land shall be pried from him; Luke will be sent to the city to earn enough to reimburse the financiers and thus maintain the land. If Wordsworth's primary concern in this narrative was to attack intrusive economic practices such as surety bonds, he certainly could have done so. In his letter to the Whig parliamentarian Charles James Fox that accompanied a complimentary copy of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, he does single out the "spreading of manufactures through every part of the part of the country" for derision, but in doing so he decries the "rapid decay of the

domestic affections among the lower order of society," not the physical conditions of those lower orders.<sup>20</sup> Patterson argues that "the letter does not speak as Goldsmith would have spoken, against enclosures, the chief cause of the virtual disappearance of the small freeholders for whom Wordsworth claimed to speak" (274). His main concern, it seems, is the psychological toll upon the relationships of rural laborers. The "rapid decay" in this poem takes the shape of the sacrifice of "his son for his land, by exposing him to the temptations of city life" (Patterson 275). Interestingly, Patterson suggests that Wordsworth may signal Michael's misjudgment by providing no evidence that the sacrifice was even necessary; no mention is made that Luke ever remits the money to pay the debt, and the land is sold off only after Michael and Isabel have died (275). Once Michael and Isabel make the fatal mistake of overvaluing their property, Luke "slackens in his duty," and Michael "many and many a day" walked to the partially-built sheep pen "And never lifted up a single stone" (474).

The question remains, though, as to what can be done to remedy the effects of alienation. Poetry written in an antipastoral mode, such as "The Female Vagrant," provides no solution, save an implicit wish that the oppression will cease, much as Charlotte Smith's conclusion to *The Emigrants* calls for "public virtue" to

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<sup>19</sup> Patterson 275.

<sup>20</sup> *The letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*. 2d edition. *Early Years 1787-1805* v. 1, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 313.



"Drive noxious vapours from the blighted earth" and "fix / The reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace!" without offering a program to achieve those ends. *The Ruined Cottage* followed this pattern as well in its initial 1797 form, ending as does "The Female Vagrant," without a narrative frame; the final words of the poem were the final words of Margaret's story. The two verse paragraphs appended in 1799 purport to turn Margaret's demise into a certain kind of gain, and as such they comprise one of the most controversial passages in the Wordsworth canon; New Historicists in particular have objected to their achievement of tranquility through transcending the materiality of suffering. *The Ruined Cottage's* narrative frame was composed after Coleridge and Wordsworth established the conceptualizing impetus of *The Recluse* in late 1797. It is not coincidental that after they laid their masterwork's foundation, the antipastoralist insistence of physical land ownership in Wordsworth's earlier poetry gave way to a redefinition of ownership. Armitage embodies this new idea of ownership through his doctrine of natural amelioration. Having no home of his own, the perpetual wanderer "had a world about him—'twas his own, / He made it" (87-88) because he enacts his notion of ownership through his visioning, which is described in the last two verse paragraphs. The "ownership" of the pedlar specifically functions as a substitute for the lack of ownership by the poem's dispossessed protagonist.

Coleridge stated that the initial purpose of *The Recluse* was to rejuvenate the hope of those who had become disillusioned by the death of democratic idealism in the wake of the French Revolution's descent into the Terror and imperial expansionism, especially after the French Directory's rejection of Pitt's suit for peace in 1796.<sup>21</sup> Hope would be found by exploring "*the minds of men*—in all Travels, Voyages and Histories," Coleridge wrote, in a "gigantic poem on a Miltonic scale in which all modern scientific and historical knowledge" might be contained.<sup>22</sup> In March 1798, Wordsworth made his announcement to a friend that "I have written 1300 lines of a poem<sup>23</sup> in which I contrive to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed. My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society. Indeed I know not any thing which will not come within the scope of my plan."<sup>24</sup> Those 1300 lines included several hundred devoted to explaining the growth of the pedlar's mind and the basis of his heightened sensibility to external nature. He possessed:

an ear which deeply felt  
The voice of Nature in the obscure wind,  
The sounding mountain and the running stream.  
To every natural form, rock, fruit, and flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
He gave a moral life; he saw them feel  
Or linked them to some feeling...

<sup>21</sup> Darlington, Beth. "Introduction." *Home at Grasmere by William Wordsworth*, ed. Beth Darlington. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Qtd. in Kenneth R Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Johnston presents a case that these first 1300 lines are parts of *The Ruined Cottage*, "The Old Cumberland Beggar," "Old Man Traveling," and "A Night Piece" (5).

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in Johnston 3.

To the broad ocean and the azure heavens  
 Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars, [he]  
 Could find no surface where its power might sleep,  
 Which spake perpetual logic to his soul,  
 And by an unrelenting agency  
 Did bind his feelings even as in a chain. (77-83, 98-103)

The coalescing power of the pedlar's feelings constitutes his claim to ownership of the world around him. Creating that coalescing power has recently been presented in scholarship as a kind of labor, a "work of feeling."<sup>25</sup> Kavis Bea Goodman in *Passionate Work: Toward a Georgics of the Feelings* finds Wordsworth setting forth the pedlar's sympathy as a binding force that unifies what would otherwise remain disparate elements. Without the ability to link natural objects to "some feeling," Margaret's work, which was evident in the tidiness of her cottage and the order of her garden, becomes wasted effort, and the grief of the narrator is also characterized as being wasted.

Proposing the existence of a "work of feeling" is sure to meet some critical resistance, for the idea that such a purely mental and emotional operation as sympathy can be considered a mode of georgic labor must seem like an academic contortion. Annabel Patterson and Frederic Jameson, for instance, demand that "work" not be watered down into a wholly intellectual pursuit.<sup>26</sup> Patterson approvingly cites Jameson's derision of the "intellectual dishonesty" of scholars who "seek to glamorize their tasks...by assimilating them to real work on the assembly

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<sup>25</sup> Goodman, 69.

line and to the experience of the resistance of matter in genuine manual labor" (278). "Writing and thinking," Jameson protests, "are not alienated labor in that sense [the manual sense]." <sup>27</sup> But that is exactly Wordsworth's point. The capability of Armitage to see nature as possessing a healing power is presented in order to un-alienate, if you will, Margaret's labor. We may well disparage the fact that this "un-alienating" work of sympathy requires an objectification of the woman, turning her into an aesthetic figure who sleeps peacefully in the grave—which is exactly what *The Romantic Ideology* protests regarding *The Ruined Cottage*. Nonetheless, I do not wish to add to evaluations made that determine the level of appropriateness in the pedlar's definition of "happiness." <sup>28</sup> I am interested in discussing how the pedlar's perspective emerges from a different sort of georgic tradition that has largely escaped critical articulation.

Goodman finds the *locus classicus* of sympathy as a kind of work in the Orphic story of the last book of the *Georgics*. When Orpheus descended into Hades to regain his wife and looks back at her upon the returning journey, losing her irretrievably, his struggle to reclaim her is called "effusus labor," a wasted labor. When he returns to the world he forswears other lovers and is dismembered by the jealous Maenads. His head floats down

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<sup>26</sup> Patterson 278.

<sup>27</sup> Qtd. from Anne D. Wallace, "Farming on Foot: Tracking Georgic in Clare and Wordsworth" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34:4 (Winter 1992), 512.

<sup>28</sup> I am referring to the pedlar's conclusion that "I turned away / And walked along my road in happiness" (524-25).

the river while "[his] voice itself and [his] cold tongue called 'Eurydice, Ah poor Eurydice!' with its fleeting breath: the banks reechoed 'Eurydice' along the whole stream" (4.524-27).

Wordsworth's longest entry in his series of *Georgics* translations is of this very passage.<sup>29</sup> In "Wordsworth's Georgic Beginnings," Graver notes the increased attention the translations give to Orpheus' song in the depths of Hades, making it more plaintive and moaning (152). When his severed head cries for his wife, Wordsworth renders, "the moaning banks reply'd / From still small voices heard on every side" (78-9, Graver 153). Graver comments that here Wordsworth combines human expression with a force within nature:

...in Virgil the banks echo the voice; in Wordsworth they are moaning banks...What is more, they contain "still small voices," a phrase that clearly suggests animistic presences in nature itself. By such additions Wordsworth is able to depict more vividly than Virgil the diffusion of Orpheus's tones into the natural world; in his translation the powers of nature assimilate the Orphic voice as they will assimilate the mangled body. (153)

Many characters elsewhere in Wordsworth benefit from his reading of Orpheus, such as Martha Ray, the Mad Mother, the female beggar in *An Evening Walk*, and especially Armytage in his instruction to the narrator on how not to waste his grief.

When the pedlar closes his tale, the narrator notes that Armytage sees him emotionally moved:

...rising instinctively,  
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power

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<sup>29</sup> *Early Poems and Fragments*, 637-48.

To thank him for the tale which he had told

...while with a brother's love  
I blessed her in the impotence of grief. (494-500)

The pedlar admonishes him:

...enough to sorrow have you given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more;  
Be wise and chearful, and no longer read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye. (508-11)

Gone is the call to reform society through revolution in 1795's *Salisbury Plain*. We could consider the pedlar's advice as akin to Bryan Edwards' when he asked Charlotte Smith simply to write happy poetry in response to her misfortunes, but Wordsworth, I will argue, has developed between 1795 and 1799 (when the above lines were added) an expression of "reading the forms of things" as a labor of sympathy.

The dominant voice of the day on the philosophy of sympathy was, of course, Adam Smith. In 1790 his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was expanded "to include an historical account of the major systems of moral philosophy," with a great emphasis on "the Stoic conception of a universal *sympatheia*, the organic chain or harmony linking all parts of the physical universe and, by extension, human society" (Goodman 167). Smith posits that feeling what other men feel is a moral imperative for the building of a strong nation, and productivity cannot occur

without it.<sup>30</sup> Imagining oneself in another's situation is an appropriation of a binding faculty that guides men to "cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts" (qtd. in Goodman 183). When one is faced with the misery of Margaret's fall and can make nothing good of it, then not only are her efforts irretrievably lost, but so are the viewer's, since his grief is judged to be "impotent." However, when "what we feel of sorrow and despair / From ruin and from change, and all the grief / The passing shews of being leave behind," that which appears to us as "an idle dream" is not permitted to "live where meditation [is]" (520-24). By engaging one's mind in such an operation, one can then "tur[n] away / And wal[k] along [one's] road in happiness" (524-25).

Wordsworth implies that experience should be transformed by placing it in a specific world view that reads nature in a particular way. He offers this mode of reading as a mental and emotional task that viewers must accomplish to reclaim meaning from others' senseless suffering. This task requires an investigative, even scientific search that yields to the investigator an intellectually-based claim of ownership. Thus, to assert that "He had a world about him—'twas his own, / He made it—for it lived only to him / And to the God who looked into his mind" (87-90), Armytage must possess "[s]uch sympathies

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1976.

[that] would often bear him far / In outward gesture, and in visible look / Beyond the common seeming of mankind" (90-92). It is the pedlar's stoic mindset, fortified by an eighteenth-century doctrine of the community-building power of sensibility, that prevents him from becoming like Robert who sinks down as "in a dream" where a "place [knows him] not."

Under the pedlar's approving eye, *The Ruined Cottage's* narrator harnesses this power when he traces the mingling of "that secret spirit of humanity" (503) with nature's "silent overgrowings" (506). Earlier, the pedlar told the narrator how vines and weeds steadily choked Margaret's spring, how the sheep encroached upon her home, and the wind blew freely through widening chinks in the walls. In canonical antipastorals such as Goldsmith's and Crabbe's, images of natural subsumption are alarming. Likewise in the *Georgics*, Virgil warns his auditor to seal the floor of his granary, otherwise vermin and insects will silently invade and all the husbandman's work will be for naught.<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, *The Ruined Cottage* embraces the "calm oblivious tendencies / Of nature" (504) that combine with

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<sup>31</sup> *Georgics* 1.176-86:

I can repeat for you many olden maxims, unless you shrink back and are loath to learn such trivial cares. And chiefly, the threshing floor must be levelled with a heavy roller, kneaded with the hand, and made solid with binding clay, lest weeds spring up, or, crumbling into dust, it gape open, and then divers plagues make mock of you. Often under the ground the tiny mouse sets up a home and builds his storehouses, or sightless moles dig out chambers; in holes may be found the toad, and all the countless pests born of



Margaret's "plants, her weeds, and flowers," an echo of the Orphic song where the "moaning banks reply" in "still small voices."

Of course, one may retort that this Orphic aestheticization is made possible only by a privilege of viewership. After all, none of the narrators in *An Evening Walk*, "The Female Vagrant," *The Ruined Cottage*, "Michael," nor in "The Thorn" or the sorrower of the Lucy poems ever themselves experience exile and poverty. This work of sympathy that asserts a restorative natural order is a strategy attacked by Jerome McGann in *The Romantic Ideology* because it minimizes human misery in the narrow sense, and it displaces historical facticities in a broader sense. McGann states that "the strategy of [the events in *The Ruined Cottage*] is to elide their distinctiveness from our memories, to drive the particulars of this tragedy to a region that is too deep ...for tears..." (83). Marjorie Levinson employs a similar analytical mode to argue that the physical details of vagrancy and industrial waste that inhabit the site of Tintern Abbey are intentionally erased.<sup>32</sup> For McGann, the defining maneuver of Wordsworthian Romanticism is the insidious fading away of historical rupture into the ameliorative natural order, which is always presented by a supervising narrator.

However, more recent criticism has shown that eighteenth-century writers were apparently less troubled than twentieth-

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the earth; or the weevil ravages a huge heap of grain, or the ant, fearful of a destitute old age.

century scholars by a blurring of a distinction between the material and supervisory labor. *The Wealth of Nations*, called elsewhere a "prose georgic,"<sup>33</sup> sets out the well-known dictum that a division of labor increases the production of the economy, overall. "The act of description [of the divisions of labor] itself point[s] to another kind of division: between those who simply performed the operations and those privileged few who could 'examine' them, and thus, like Smith, represent them and turn them into objects of knowledge" (Siskin 125). Joshua Reynolds "reformulated the divisions Smith had encoded into his prescription for a wealthy nation....Reynolds's argument transforms that leisure into a superior kind of work, for such activity provides the most important 'advantages to society' through the 'gradual exaltation of human nature'" (125). In "The Landscape of Labor: Transformations of the Georgic" John Murdoch shows that "headwork," the supervision of physical labor, was reckoned (by the landowners, of course) to be more important than the tilling itself.<sup>34</sup> For example, Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*<sup>35</sup> instructed landowners on how to turn so-called mindless labor into profit. In each issue new farms were offered as examples of

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<sup>32</sup> Levinson, 14-57.

<sup>33</sup> Siskin, Clifford. *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Murdoch, James. "The Landscape of Labor: Transformations of the Georgic." *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*. ed. Kenneth R. Johnson, et. al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), 176-93.

land, crop, and labor management.<sup>36</sup> Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*, it must be remembered, was written in this same vein, as a guide book on agricultural supervision. Still, it can be argued that the *Georgics* themselves are perhaps less about the gritty details of farming than about the benefits to the nation in governing according to nature's laws. The pedlar's perspective, then, represents a mode of ownership that claims its derivation from a careful observation of the normally hidden truths of nature. McGann, in fact, seems to imply this when he states that the overgrowth of Margaret's cottage "finally comes to stand as an emblem of the endurance of nature's care and ceaseless governance..." (83, emphasis added). Articulating the principles of that governance is the work of a poetry that rewrites the relation of land and labor.

I do not dispute the textual existence of McGann's conception of "displacement"<sup>37</sup> in Wordsworth, so much as I find that "displacement" remains uncontextualized in eighteenth-century generic history. That is to say, the pedlar's particular

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<sup>35</sup> Arthur Young founded the periodical *Annals of Agriculture* (1784-1809) "to give farmers a place to record their experiments." See Low, 119.

<sup>36</sup> John Barrell records Arthur Young's impact on ideas of enclosure and agricultural improvement in *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 68-91.

<sup>37</sup> I set "displacement" here in quotations because New Historicists have employed the word differently than I have done throughout this dissertation. I have referred to displacement in a physical sense: the involuntary removal of people from their land, of workers from the benefits of their produce. McGann's "displacement" is a metanarrative maneuver by Romantic poets that

employment of sympathetic principles is less accurately characterized as a sleight of hand than it is a function of Wordsworth's adaptation of georgic-informed systems of thought. For Wordsworth, Armytage's viewership is a georgic labor (and by short extension, Wordsworth saw his own expression of Armytage's vision as a georgic labor, too<sup>38</sup>) because his viewership is presented as more than simply an act of observation; the wanderer—and through him, the poet—are to conduct the most essential of georgic tasks: they must bring order to the relationship of the mind and nature.

The process of bringing order permeates Wordsworth's redefinition of categories of writing. When he subtitled "Michael" "a Pastoral Poem," and then renamed the 1802 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* from 1800's "With Other Poems" to "With Pastoral and Other Poems" (even though he added no new poems to the 1802 edition), a notable difference he *did* make between the 1800 and 1802 editions is the section in the Preface that has been called "What is a Poet?":

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filters the material conditions of dispossession through a naturalized transcendancy.

<sup>38</sup> Here I refer back to the conclusion of my first chapter, where I qualified the consideration of "poetry as georgic labor" by excluding published writing, in and of itself, as a "georgic product" on the grounds that the conception is too broad when it admits writing regardless of the subject matter. If Wordsworth thought of his publications as a work of the earth, so to speak, he did so out of his role as poet within a Virgilian georgic framework. Graver makes this argument in "'Honorable Toil': The Georgic Ethic of *Prelude* I." *Studies in Philology* 92:3, Summer 1995. 346-60. See chapter four of Siskin's *The Work of Writing* (103-29) for his discussion of "the georgic at work" in eighteenth-century poetry.

Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. (255-56)<sup>39</sup>

He elevates the act of binding to a heroic level. On behalf of the "vast empire of human society," the poet will take all human concerns (language, manners, laws, and customs) into his mighty eye, looking both back to history and ahead to a better world that he brings into being. He gains the office of "Poet" by being more than a man of feeling, and more than a man of science; in him, "passion and knowledge" are bound. In other words, the Poet will join contemporary theories of the operation of sympathy with an inductive analysis of material and cultural artifacts, all for the sake of improving the empire of humanity. Nothing will escape his governing powers:

the remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. (260)

<sup>39</sup> *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Brett and Jones.

More than a sage who imparts wisdom, Wordsworth's poet seems to take the role of a cosmic midwife, helping things that were unseen enter the world of flesh and blood, welcoming "the Being thus produced." What was previously a mass of impalpable and inchoate data from nature (the world of the Chemist, Botanist, Mineralogist), he delivers into the experiential human matrix inhabited by "enjoying and suffering beings." Such rarified interests may seem greatly removed from the more down-to-earth matter of the georgic mode, but Wordsworth's plan benefited from a British history of shaping the georgic's plasticity into frameworks of thought. In 1605 Francis Bacon presented a plan for national improvement through an inductive investigation of nature founded on the *Georgics*. His treatise, *The Advancement of Learning*, aimed to overthrow that day's emphasis on scholastic logic, replacing it with a nation-wide effort to educate England's youth by observing manual labor and natural phenomena. Quoting *Georgics* 3.289 ("Here is toil, hence hope for fame ye sturdy yeomen!"), he proposed "to instruct and suborn action and active life.... [T]hese Georgics of the mind, concerning the husbandry and tillage thereof, are no less worthy than the heroical descriptions of Virtue, Duty, and Felicity".<sup>40</sup> Bacon turns to the Jovian theogeny of *Georgics* I, arguing that God desires a world where *labor omnia vincit* because it forces men to

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<sup>40</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis*, ed. Arthur Johnson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 147.

overcome hardship with inventions—and inventions, he asserts, are born from experience, not adherence to an *a priori* deductiveness.<sup>41</sup> England must therefore endow institutions to promulgate this “georgics of the mind.”

Although the government ignored his *Georgics*-based plan, Bacon’s line of reasoning was used as a model by eighteenth-century thinkers. “Social Baconism,” as Clifford Siskin calls it, assumed that “everything that relates to the state of learning...should be treated *historically*.” (47) Thus, when David Hume refuted the politico-economic argument that “all trading nations are rivals and cannot flourish except at one another’s expense,” he based his proposal for free trade on case studies, not preexisting rules of logic. Joseph Priestley’s 1767 book *The History and Present State of Electricity* drew from the “experimental history of earlier experiments, in other words, the recounting of the progress of knowledge [which] productively enables further progress” (48).

Wordsworth therefore inherited two British intellectual traditions of organizing knowledge and advancing learning: a “georgics of the feelings” that stemmed from Adam Smith’s theories of sympathy, and a “georgics of the mind” that treats cultural and natural phenomena as historical data. The former operates in the realm of “passion,” the latter in the realm of “knowledge”—a knowledge of external nature. By saying that passion and knowledge can be bound together, Wordsworth

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<sup>41</sup> Qtd. in Patterson 136.

anticipates a unification of the worlds of man and nature. Since he wrote the "What is a Poet?" section close to the time that he composed the Prospectus to *The Recluse* (which celebrates the marriage of mind and nature), he may have his "spousal verse" in mind when he uses the verb "to bind." The metaphor of joining mind and nature (which I am arguing is intimately related to that of "passion and knowledge") for the purpose of elevating humanity also has a Baconian precedent. Bacon's *The Great Instauration* theorized that an explanation of "the true relation between the nature of things and the nature of the mind" is a requisite for the "return to the condition of the original Eden."<sup>42</sup> Such an explanation would be:

as the strewing and decoration of the bridal chamber of the mind and the universe, the divine goodness assisting, out of which marriage let us hope (and be this the prayer of the bridal song) there may spring helps to man, and a line and race of inventions that may in some degree subdue and overcome the necessities and miseries of humanity. (qt. in Abrams 61)

*Home at Grasmere* takes up precisely this burden as it announces its own invention (a "voice of life") whose purpose is to overcome human suffering. But there is a cost Wordsworth cannot overcome. In *Home at Grasmere's* marriage of mind and nature, every element of the bucolic process is redefined. The redefinition brings into being a georgic mode that writes over antipastoralism's refusal to forget the miseries of labor.

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<sup>42</sup> Qtd. in Abrams 61.



Remembering the announcement of his poetry "as an experiment" in the 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, we can view *Home at Grasmere* as a continuation of Wordsworth's inductive investigation. The *Lyrical Ballads*' Preface offered its poems as case studies; rural laborers were the subjects because in "low and rustic life" the "essential passions of the heart find a better soil..." (245). The variables of the experiment: "incidents of common life." The outcome: "primary laws of our nature" yielded from the incorporation of men's passions "with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."<sup>43</sup> In *Home at Grasmere*, once those primary laws are discovered, giving voice to them is a creative act:

Is there not  
An art, a music, and a stream of words  
That shall be life, the acknowledged voice of life?  
Shall speak of what is done among the fields,  
Done truly there, or felt, of solid good  
And real evil, yet be sweet withal,  
More grateful, more harmonious than the breath,  
The idle breath of sweetest pipe attuned  
To pastoral fancies? Is there such a stream  
Pure and unsullied, flowing from the heart  
With motions of true dignity and grace,  
Or must we seek these things where man is not? (620-31)

Words of a poet become life itself ("words / That shall be life"), a *logos* incarnate. By speaking "what is done among the fields, / Done truly there, or felt, of solid good / And real evil," Wordsworth makes a sly shift to a higher register—from the material to the spiritual. At the very moment that he

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<sup>43</sup> Preface *Lyrical Ballads* 245.

demands that his feet are on the same ground as the Grasmere farmers with his eyes locked upon the solidity of their work, he slips into an unearthly glide. Upheld by his own breath—a stream that is “pure and unsullied,” full of “true dignity and grace”—he ascends above the falseness of “pastoral fancies.” We may well wonder whether his goal is to describe field work accurately or to transfigure that work into a pure and enduring “voice of life.” Writing a year earlier in 1805 he performs the same maneuver in the twelfth book of the thirteen-book *Prelude*. He exposes:

The utter hollowness of what we name  
 The wealth of nations, where alone that wealth  
 Is lodged, and how encreased; and having gained  
 A more judicious knowledge of what makes  
 The dignity of individual man—  
 Of man, no composition of the thought,  
 Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man  
 Of whom we read, the man whom we behold  
 With our own eyes...  
 Why is this glorious creature to be found  
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,  
 Why may not many be? (12.79-92)

Who is really the subject of this study: the man we see or the man we read about (in Wordsworth's poems)? He collapses them—the man of literature and the literal man—as though in that collapse “abstraction, shadow, [and] image” are jettisoned. Tellingly, all that is left of “the man” (the word's repetition is as mesmerizing as a mantra) are his “dignity” and glory. Therein lies the wealth of nations: not in trade, goods, or productivity, but in the loftiness of humanity. The material

economy is exchanged for a spiritual one in a way that cloaks the exchange itself.

The fallout from this disguise is that every element of the georgics of displacement undergoes a reformulation: 1) property ownership becomes *Bildung*, 2) alienation as eviction becomes psychic turmoil, and most importantly, 3) rural labor becomes prelapsarian toil. The fault line between the last pair splits *Home at Grasmere*—literally—leaving the resistant georgic mode of the late eighteenth-century in a fragmented, if not fatal, state.

In December 1799 Dorothy and William Wordsworth returned to Grasmere and moved into Dove Cottage. It would have been unusual if in recording the event Wordsworth did not seize his new abode as a symbol of a self-sufficient, peaceful way of life. The fields of Meliboeus, the "cot" of Goldsmith and Crabbe, the Bignor Park of Charlotte Smith, and the numerous possessions of the female vagrant all indicate that safety is assured so long as the property can be held. Wordsworth's claims for Dove Cottage, however, seem outrageous:

This solitude is mine; the distant thought  
Is fetched out of the heaven in which it was.  
The unappropriated bliss hath found  
An owner, and that owner I am he.  
The Lord of this enjoyment is on Earth  
And in my breast. What wonder if I speak  
With fervour, am exalted with the thought  
Of my possessions, of my genuine wealth  
Inward and outward? What I keep have gained,  
Shall gain, must gain, if sound be my belief  
From past and present rightly understood  
That in my day of childhood I was less  
The mind of Nature, less, take all in all,

Whatever may be lost, than I am now.  
 For proof behold this Valley and behold  
 Yon Cottage, where with me my Emma dwells. (83-98)

Owning a home—or just renting it, since Wordsworth did not become a freeholder until 1803—is somehow proof that he has increasingly become “the mind of Nature.” It is common to read this passage, combined with “What Being, therefore, since the birth of Man / Had ever more abundant cause to speak / Thanks...? / ...[A]mong the bowers / Of blissful Eden this was neither given / Nor could be given” (117-19, 123-25), as a metaphor for William and Dorothy being an Adam and Eve who claim a new Eden. But gaining the very mind of nature is surely an excessive gesture toward apotheosis, which he amplifies by placing the stress of the fourth beat of line 86 on “I.” “I am” as a declaration of self-authorization is a startling echo of the Biblical announcements of divinity at the burning bush and in the gospel of John.<sup>44</sup> The language indulges itself in religious imagery: thought has descended from heaven and resides in a man, a man who is exalted by both an imperative of eternality (have, shall, must gain), and the culmination of prophecy: the cottage is a “possession of the good / Which had been sighed for, ancient thought fulfilled” (125-26). When the Wordsworths occupy their new home, they institute a new age that once was. Bacon’s *Great Instauration* was to be catalyzed by inventions; Wordsworth’s is given birth by the arrival of his own mature Being on a certain

plot of ground. Prior to his inauguration of the new Eden, legal ownership of land was a requisite for personal tranquility. Now his becoming the "mind of Nature" (96) realizes his "genuine wealth / Inward and outward" (90-91).

There is an involved precedent in western literature for Wordsworth's characterization of the growth of his mind, to which M. H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism* speaks.<sup>45</sup> Abrams finds the soul of Romanticism in the claim of English and German poet-prophets who attempt to speak a new era of humanity into existence:

Thus, redemption even after it has been translocated to history and translated into the self-education of the general mind of mankind, continues to be represented in the central Christian trope of life as a pilgrimage and quest: the *Bildungsgeschichte* of the Romantic philosophy of consciousness tends to be imagined in the story form of a *Bildungsreise* whose end is its own beginning. (191)

In Wordsworth's revised pastoral, the concern for manual labor on one's own land fades into the portrait of the self-educating pilgrimage of the narrator. For example, in *The Ruined Cottage* and "Michael" the narrative framework subsumes the land owned by Margaret and Michael and the work they do. The effort that Wordsworth puts into developing Armitage and the poet of "Michael" as characters tends to remove the focus on the protagonists-proper and recenter it on the consciousness of the

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<sup>44</sup> Exodus 3.14; John 4.26, 6.35, 8.23, 8.58, 9.5, 10.7, 11.25, 13.13, 14.6, 15.1.

<sup>45</sup> Abrams, M. H.. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971).

teller. Thus, regarding his assumption of land in Grasmere, *Home at Grasmere's* narrator rhetorically asks:

And did it cost so much, and did it ask  
Such length of discipline, and could it seem  
An act of courage, and the thing itself  
A conquest? (64-67)

The voice of *Home at Grasmere* stakes his ownership on the embodiment of "the personal odyssey, or *Bildung*, of one actual, heroic individual, who is in some sense a surrogate for others, for the whole human race".<sup>46</sup>

Now, if a *sense* of ownership (which is proffered as a "more genuine" ownership than a deed of property alone may obtain) is a reward for a successful, personal conquest, then the only way that one could be sundered from that "genuine wealth" is through inner, individual failings. External, social pressures have little to do with the instances of estrangement in *Home at Grasmere*; in Wordsworth's *Grasmere*, Meliboeus could never be evicted—he could only feel evicted. The speaker's repeated requests of the valley to close him in, to embrace him, reflect the poet's desire for a sealing that pretends to be hermetic. The claim of safety from the common, outside world bears within that claim a fear that he tries to quell: "But I am safe," the narrator says in great earnest, "yes, one at least is safe" (74). Hope, masquerading as certainty, is strained into the oxymoron of *Grasmere*, the "Unity entire" (170). What should be a "Whole

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<sup>46</sup> Harding, Anthony John. "Forgetfulness and the Poetic Self in 'Home at Grasmere'" in *Wordsworth Circle* 22:2 (Spring 1991), 109.

without dependence or defect" is implicitly divisible. If Grasmere is safe from the alienating forces in society, those who occupy its land are still susceptible to fissures that can disrupt one's personal wholeness.

*Home at Grasmere's* story of the adulterous shepherd is such an example, laying the blame for decay on mental infirmities more stridently than did *The Ruined Cottage* and "Michael." The shepherd was an ideal husband and husbandman, a "Master of a little lot of ground," mild-mannered, and even honored by the community for being well-read. He had been many "Years safe from large misfortune," with his only blemish being a vaguely described "carelessness" that "combined perchance / With other cause less obvious" (498-99). Whatever his fault, it destroyed his "tranquil pleasure," leading him into a "troubled pleasure" from which his guilt demanded suicide. Kenneth Johnston finds that this story and the two others which follow it in *Home at Grasmere* "are odd as generalizations about the special mental power of Grasmere because they are so nearly pointless, or require so much special pleading and reading to discern their purpose" (221). Even more damning, perhaps the shepherd never belonged in Grasmere in the first place, as Anthony John Harding argues (111). In an epithalamium of the mind and nature, violated wedding vows are fatally discordant; proof of this, he contends, is that the tale is excised in the transposition from MS B to MS D some years later. By the time that MS D was drafted, though, *The Excursion* had already been published, which

told a modified version of the story in Book VI (lines 1080-1114); there was simply no reason to maintain the narrative of the shepherd's suicide in *Home at Grasmere*. Yet his place in the history of georgic development is not inconsequential. Given the literary landscape on which *Home at Grasmere* is built, the abnegation of social factors playing into the loss of a "Shepherd and a Tiller of the ground" (479) signals a momentous shift in the mode of the georgic.

That shift looks like a fault line that ultimately fractures the poem, if not Wordsworth's georgic pastoral mode itself. In 1806 Wordsworth wrote the story of the shepherd, as well as the other tales in *Home at Grasmere*, apparently in an effort to solve a problem that halted the poem's composition in April 1800. What seems like "pointlessness" in the 1806 stories is the shockwave of continued reverberations of his dilemma: if Grasmere is paradise, how is it that suffering can be present? I read the inner turmoil in the shepherd narrative as born of a struggle to quiet the undeniable ill effects of the human condition. In the verse paragraph immediately preceding the shepherd's story, the material, suffering conditions of labor are sublimated into a spiritualized, prelapsarian economy:

Yet is it something gained—it is in truth  
 A mighty gain—that Labour here preserves  
 His rosy face, a Servant only here  
 Of the fire-side or of the open field,  
 A Freeman, therefore sound and unenslaved;  
 That extreme penury is here unknown,  
 And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness,  
 Mortal to body and the heaven-born mind;  
 That they who want are not too great a weight



For those who can relieve. Here may the heart  
 Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering  
 Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze  
 Of her own native element; the hand  
 Be ready and unwearied without plea  
 From task too frequent and beyond its powers,  
 For languor or indifference or despair.  
 And as these lofty barriers break the force  
 Of winds—this deep vale as it doth in part  
 Conceal us from the storm—so here there is  
 A Power and a protection for the mind,  
 Dispensed indeed to other solitudes  
 Favoured by noble privilege like this,  
 Where kindred independence of estate  
 Is prevalent, where he who tills the field  
 He, happy Man! is Master of the field  
 And treads the mountain which his Father trod.  
 Hence, and from other local circumstance,  
 In this enclosure many of the old  
 Substantial virtues have a firmer tone  
 Than in the base and ordinary world. (439-68)

The use of "enclosure" at line 466 is surprising and significant. There should be little doubt that such a loaded word deployed apart from its political context discloses an intention that swerves far from the norm. Wordsworth's pronouncement of the timeless "unity entire" and the more timely "local circumstance" (465) of freely held plots of land prevents the idea of actual, legislative enclosure from encroaching upon Grasmere's sanctity; the region is then sealed off in a holy solitude from the "base and ordinary world" (468). But what is the agent of enclosure? Answering that question brought *Home at Grasmere's* composition to a six-year standstill at line 457 with the words "—so here there is..." (Johnston 219). The answer is given as a response to the misery detailed in the first part of the verse paragraph. What begins in the supposedly material realm of labor ascends to

become "A Power and a protection for the mind." Oddly, this transfiguration of labor into a spiritualized force is accomplished through suffering, or more accurately, through a circulation of suffering as a commodity. "Cold" and "abject wretchedness" are breathed into the heart (a strange metaphor, to be sure) and exhaled as a "kind of fresher breeze." Grasmere is like a Petri dish in the laboratory of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. Suffering is posited as necessary for the health of the community, similar to the Old Cumberland Beggar's function (an argument that has drawn perhaps the sharpest denunciation in Wordsworth criticism). This kind of sanguine suffering is what colors the cheek of Labor's rosy face. Rural labor, even the hardship of it, has become part of the new Eden.

We are to realize that although sympathetic feeling for another's suffering may be a native part of Grasmere's landscape—that is, sympathy may circulate in the new Eden instinctively—the work of one's own "hand" (a hand that is "ready and unwearied without plea / From task too frequent and beyond its powers") that tries to relieve the weight of others' "cold and hunger's abject wretchedness" will be *effusus labor*, a wasted effort, but for the poet's ability to pronounce a "Power and a protection for the mind." Wordsworth could not write the line "A Power and a protection for the mind" in 1806 until he had written the thirteen-book *Prelude* in 1805; he filled the six-year gulf between line 457 ("—so here there is") and line 458 with the articulation of his own "glorious work" (*Prelude* 1.158) as poet.

He characterizes his labor as "honorable toil" (1.653), despite the fact that, as Bruce Graver reminds us:

...it was especially problematic to be a poet in a rural community like Grasmere, among shepherds and farmers forced to work hard for a living. The dalesmen spent their days toiling in the very fields and pastures where William and Dorothy rambled at leisure. (346)<sup>47</sup>

Wordsworth justifies his place, not only in Grasmere-proper, but in his civic position in the nation, by asserting that he has become the mouthpiece of the "acknowledged voice of life" (*Home at Grasmere* 622) on nature's behalf. Without the governing action of his mind, "the existence of a purposive moral agency in the natural world that works to form human beings, both emotionally and intellectually,"<sup>48</sup> will lie fallow.

If he would bring that natural moral agency of sympathy to fruition and thereby inaugurate a new Eden for his society, he would first have to solve a perplexing problem that was so distressing that it precipitated Wordsworth's breakdown in composing *Home at Grasmere* in 1800. When he and Dorothy first moved to Grasmere, they identified themselves with two swans "to an extraordinary extent" (Johnston 89):

They came, like Emma and myself, to live  
Together here in peace and solitude,  
Choosing this Valley...

...to us  
They were more dear than may be well believed,

...their state so much resembled ours;  
They also having chosen this abode;  
They strangers, and we strangers; they a pair,

<sup>47</sup> Graver, "Honorable Toil" 346.

<sup>48</sup> Graver "Honorable Toil" 360.

And we a solitary pair like them. (326-28, 333-34,  
338-42)

But when he admits that the swans are missing, he spends what may be an excessive amount of energy speculating on the cause of their disappearance, which he knows is probably due to their being shot by hunters in the valley. The randomness of their loss is an affront to the extreme meaningfulness that the poet had invested in every natural phenomena up to this point. Thus, if the swans could lose the new Eden, why could not he and his Emma? How can evil and the new pastoral coexist? Why is there fallenness in millennial purity? Beyond that, what could he do to change it? This was precisely the uncrossable bar that Wordsworth raised.

He did contrive a response, one akin to *The Ruined Cottage's* silent overgrowings that lead to happiness. The fate of the swans is likened to an undesired interruption of coming to a rest after floating down a stream.

What if I floated down a pleasant stream  
And now am landed and the motion gone—  
Shall I reprove myself? Ah no, the stream  
Is flowing and will never cease to flow,  
And I shall float upon that stream again.  
By such forgetfulness the soul becomes—  
Words cannot say how beautiful. (381-87)

Once again, the physical is exchanged for the spiritual, reminiscent of the experience at Lethe. Harding, indeed, reads this as "Wordsworth's own version of the river of forgetfulness" (113). Forgetting suffering, the essential condition of humans

(or swans), permits an aesthetic image that transcends words, much as the water droplets on the weeds in Margaret's garden let Armytage know that all would be well, much as the Orphic lament blends with the moaning of the river banks.

Certainly a discourse that programmatically defuses history must lead to the forgetting of a mode of writing that is grounded in issues of social displacement. Wordsworth's work of narration in its assertion of an ameliorative natural order encloses the material work of labor. This, then, represents the way that the story of the resistant georgic that began in the late eighteenth-century has come full circle. The antipastoral mode emerged in resistance to the poetic displacement of injustice by writers like Grainger. Wordsworth's displacement of displacement at Grasmere is a return to that essential orthodox maneuver. In the process, the temple that would be a celebration of the work and spirit of humanity was left unfinished. The georgic spirit, which had grown since Charles Churchill, was abandoned, left aside as an artifact to be re-imagined by post-Romantic poets like Wallace Stevens, who once again saw that "Man is the intelligence of his soil," or Robert Frost, who pointed to exactly the gap between poet and farm that perhaps cannot be filled.

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